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An Examination of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Antibias-Antiracist Curriculm in a Montessori Setting

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AN EXAMINATION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND ANTIBIAS-ANTIRACIST CURRICULUM IN A MONTESSORI SETTING

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ABSTRACT

The research consisted of a qualitative case study of three urban public Montessori schools with a population of 51% or more of students of color and a commitment of 2 years or more of CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting. The theoretical framework used for the study was the critical race theory, which is the conceptual foundation for examining inequities in public education.

This research dissertation had a focus on gaining an insight into the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents toward CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools by examining the practices in three public Montessori schools. The possible connections to student outcomes, such as behavioral referrals, suspension rates, and academic achievement for students of color were explored to determine if any connections exist between CRP-ABAR and outcomes for students of color within a public Montessori setting.

Three major themes emerged of the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the impact of the CRP-ABAR in a Montessori setting. The CRP-ABAR could be delivered through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach and the CRP-ABAR connects to Montessori through peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment. The CRP-ABAR practices impact students of color primarily through social emotional growth with limited academic outcomes. Even with an intentional focus and diversity training, many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking. Some parents believed racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity. Other parents identified some teachers-staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity.

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To all the future children–may we contribute to the ongoing struggle for justice, racial equity, and the dignity of human life, where we can live in a world where Black Lives Matter.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research dissertation to my beloved parents, Ophelia DuPree King and Frank Earl King, and to my brother, Corporal Wilbur Earl King, Marine Corps (Ret.).

I dedicate this research dissertation to my beloved parents: Alicia Lievano, Rosalino Canzoneri, and Jaime Carvajal Palma.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As Montessori educators for more than 25 years, and cofounders and codirectors of what is considered to be a progressive school by many parents and educators, the journey of self-reflection and accountability began by examining discipline practices that created disproportionate rates for African American students in comparison to Whites and Hispanics. Even when the enrollment rates were at their lowest in the first 2 years (1998 to 2000) of operating the school understudy, the cofounders observed that teachers were sending African American males to the office for discipline problems more often than White or Hispanic students. During the first 2 years, African Americans accounted for approximately 22% of the student population, which was comparable to the number of Whites who attended. Hispanics accounted for 60% of the student population. Yet, the African Americans, especially the males, were consistently at a higher rate being sent to the office for minor infractions, such as not completing their work, to more serious ones, such as noncompliance with school rules or conflicts with other students.

In the first year of operation, with only 86 students and 126 in the second year, the official case management, disciplinary Scan forms utilized by the urban district (in which the school is situated) to write up disciplinary infractions on the students' permanent records were not used. Rather, an observational notebook was implemented to document every behavioral breech that occurred in the school. The second pattern observed was while the African American males were sent to the office because of conflicts with other

students, they were sent to the office almost exclusively by themselves. A discussion was held with staff to inform them that all situations involving students, resulting in a removal from class or an office visit, required the teachers to send both or all students involved in the conflict.

Both administrators began to conduct investigations, speaking individually with each student and sometimes interviewing witnesses, without sharing prior knowledge of the information gathered. They utilized open-ended questions and realized that, in most instances, both parties were equally guilty of breaking the rules; however, the teachers appeared to be oblivious to the details of how the conflicts arose in the first place and where the responsibility fell in the context of the situations. This nonbiased investigative approach resulted in teachers sending African American males less frequently to the office. When they did send them, they sent the other student or students involved in the conflict as well. Once the information was gathered, it was shared with the teachers and all parties involved took responsibility in solving conflicts in an equitable manner.

Over the past 19 years, the codirectors consciously made efforts to be fair and just in the school's disciplinary practices by not imposing racial biases on their African American students. They have been successful in that there are no overt disparities between suspensions of Blacks in the school and other populations. However, this does not mean that the school is free from racial biases. Their African American students score lower on standardized tests in comparison to other racial or ethnic groups and have done so over the history of the school. Opening a Montessori public school, committed to the fidelity of Montessori, alone was not sufficient to stop disproportionate disciplinary referrals. Hiring teachers of color was not necessarily a guarantee that their African

American students would fare as well as other racial and ethnic groups on high-stakes testing. Something additional was needed. Through the research, while looking for solutions to improve outcomes for all students, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and antibias-antiracist practices (ABAR) were presented as promising methodologies to combat deficit theories and promote positive student outcomes. The CRP generally considers the values and experiences of the students they wish to influence or motivate. The ABAR has a focus on developing tools to confront bigotry, racism, and an awareness of discriminatory practices to examine the effects of those practices. The ABAR was designed to build off elements often missing in the CRP (i.e., the sociopolitical aspect that examines institutions and the power structure).

More than anything, this experience highlights the necessity for this inquiry to examine the intersection between CRP-ABAR and Montessori curriculum to see if there is a critical link to outcomes for students of color.

Today, the prevalence of the opportunity gap between Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students in comparison to their White peers continues to be an unsolved dilemma in education (Nation's Report Card, 2015). Educational scholars have offered a host of explanations as to the underlying causes of the opportunity gap. In the 1960s, scholars created cultural deficit theories to imply that children of color were victims of lifestyles that put them at a disadvantage when it came to learning (Ladson-Billings, 2016). In the 1968 Coleman Report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, Coleman argued that integration and better resources were not the only contributing factors to improve achievement of African American children: The racial composition of a school, the students' sense of their place in their environment, and the student's family

background were all contributing factors for academic success (Ladson-Billings 2016).

In contrast, other researchers placed the responsibility for narrowing the opportunity gap on the shoulders of the school staff and the responsible stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrators, policymakers; Banks & McGee Banks, 2016; Gay, 2000). According to Trumbull and Rothstein-Fisch (2011), cultural values influence students' social and academic goals. If teachers are sensitive to, acknowledge, and respect the child's culture, the child will become more motivated and successful in school. For children to buy into the educational system and become motivated to learn, education must be relevant for all students. An example of this type of education is CRP.

The CRP empowers students intellectually, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Underlying the concept of CRP is academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. *Cultural competence* is a term that refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge and fluency in at least one other culture. Sociopolitical consciousness is the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Like CRP, ABAR uses instructional strategies that could possibly enhance learning. The CRP, as supported by critical race theorists, such as Ladson-Billings (1995) had a power analysis, but it was dropped in most widespread applications of its use. The ABAR puts this work front and center. Supporting all children's full development in a multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural world, ABAR gives them the tools to stand up to prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and eventually to institutional racism. Successful ABAR

teachers use materials and curricula that reflect students' background, needs, and interests. Both ABAR and CRP are tools that can be used to enhance existing curricula that may meet the needs of diverse learners. An example of a curriculum that may benefit students of color by incorporating both CRP and ABAR is Montessori (Debs, 2016b).

In the quest to improve the quality of education, the Montessori pedagogy can be a viable alternative to traditional education in public schools (Debs & Brown, 2016b). Initially reserved for the elite and primarily White suburbanites, Montessori education in America has taken a turn in its popularity from its renaissance in the 1960s and later its reemergence in the 1970s and 1980s as a means to bring Whites back to public schools with large minority populations (Debs, 2016b). In the 1970s, due to court-ordered desegregation plans in Cincinnati, Ohio, and other urban school districts across the nation, a series of magnet Montessori schools were created to integrate the public schools (Debs, 2016b; McCormick Rambusch, 2013).

At the time of this study, Montessori education is the largest alternative educational pedagogy in U.S. public schools and is increasingly serving students of color in the preschool through elementary years (Debs, 2016a). However, a misconception is that diversity in Montessori is a recent phenomenon. Debs (2016b) uncovered a rich history of diversity of students with extensive involvement from people of color starting Montessori schools in both the public and private sectors. In the definition of terms, *students of color* would include Blacks and others from the Global Majority, such as Latinx, Asians, Native Americans, and people of mixed-racial heritage. According to the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (2017), it was reported that there are more than 500 Montessori public schools. Debs (2016c) conducted a sample of 300

Montessori schools (approximately two thirds of the total number of Montessori schools) and found 54% of the students were students of color, which included students who are Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or multiracial (i.e., non-White). With a steady number of Blacks, an increasing number of Latinx and lower socioeconomic students within the public Montessori school population, the research community in Montessori, according to Brown and Steel (2015), is calling for more empirical studies in the area of Montessori and outcomes for students of color. Of the students enrolled in the public schools, the National Center for Education Statistics (2017) found 50% are students of color. According to Debs (2016c),

> Public Montessori enrolls more racially diverse students in comparison to U.S. public schools overall. . . . Public Montessori schools enroll a higher percentage of Black students (27%) compared to the national average (15%). Black and Latino public Montessori students are more likely to attend a racially diverse school (where the student body is between 25% and 75% students of color), in comparison to their public school counterparts. (p. 10)

These statistics are somewhat in alignment with public school enrollment.

Banks and Maixner (2016), Brown and Steel (2015), and Stansbury (2014) expressed the need for research by advocating for an in-depth examination of social-emotional and academic outcomes for students of color within a Montessori context. Despite initial studies, there are important gaps in the research for outcomes for students of color (Hall & Murray, 2011). Other researchers (Ansari & Winsler, 2014; Brown & Steele, 2015; Debs & Brown, 2016; Lillard, 2005; Stansbury, 2014) agreed that research with strong methodological designs, both qualitative and quantitative, is lacking,

especially in the Montessori public school arena.

In one of the few qualitative studies of a public Montessori school, Stansbury (2014) found evidence of both institutional racism and racially disparate disciplinary practices in the classroom. Even conversations amongst Montessori stakeholders about race and racism are limited with the claim that Montessori educators are inclusive and color-blind (Banks & Maixner, 2016). One such response to this dilemma is the newly created social media platform, Montessori for Social Justice (MSJ). The MSJ is an interactive network where ideas and best practices are shared by engaging in dialogues, focusing on educational equity, promoting, and supporting initiatives from a practical standpoint, inside classrooms, schools, and communities. The MSJ's (2017) mission includes the following: "Increase cultural competencies of all Montessori teachers so that Montessori is culturally responsive to students of color" (para. 1). The MSJ, with over 3,000 members, is bringing together Montessori educators, parents, and those interested in mobilizing efforts to help eradicate and dismantle social institutions that disseminate injustices. These inequities plague communities of color, particularly those with limited economic means (MSJ, 2017).

In the response to encouraging dialogue about racism in a Montessori context, MSJ is gaining attention and entering the established organizations of mainstream Montessori. As an example, the American Montessori Society (AMS) sponsored a webinar entitled "Antibias Education for Students and Educators Alike" on January 11, 2018, presented by Jewell, founding member and board member of MSJ (Montessori Webinars, 2017). As of 2020, MSJ has grown to over 4,000 members with many of the founding board members conducting antibias trainings nationally. Jewell's book, *This*

Book is Antiracist 20 Lessons on How to Wake up, Take Action, and Do the Work, is a New York Times best seller.

Debs (2016b) also was one of the founding members of MSJ and served on their board. A doctoral dissertation entitled *Diverse Parents, Desirable Schools: Public Montessori Fit and Conflict in the Era of School Choice* was a comprehensive example of published research focusing on issues pertinent to students and families of color within a Montessori context. Debs provided a historical background, including many schools operated and founded by educators of color who have been left out of the American Montessori narrative. Through the ethnographical, 2-year, dissertation study, Debs delved into the intricacies and complexities of two public Montessori schools and revealed how they are both viable alternatives for students of color, while simultaneously becoming a *conflicted fit,* a term Debs used to describe the paradoxical phenomena of Montessori for students of color.

On one hand, Montessori can be a credible alternative for students of color whose learning styles tend to be more congruent with Montessori pedagogy (e.g., students can move, use hands-on learning, and research subjects that interest them; Hall & Murray, 2011). Yet, on the other hand, parents and students of color often feel isolated, concerned about the perceived lack of academic rigor (Debs, 2016b), and have found Montessori schools to be guilty of racial bias, even if the extent is less than that of traditional schools (Brown & Steele, 2015).

Without oversimplifying Debs' (2016b) work, one of the tenets of that research study emphasized the need for exploring relationships within public Montessori settings for parents and students of color through a lens that ensures fidelity of implementation,

while expanding the Montessori classroom practices to include CRP and ABAR curricula. Debs (2016c) contended CRP-ABAR curricula could lessen the conflicted fit for families of color and possibly impact favorable social-emotional and academic student outcomes. Debs (2016b) suggested there is a need for a commitment of Montessori schools and the Montessori community at large to provide meaningful training in ABAR practices, including recruitment of teachers of color and administrators within both the public and private Montessori sector.

This research dissertation has a focus on expanding one aspect of Debs' (2016b) study to gain an insight into the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators toward CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools by examining the practices in three public Montessori schools. In addition, the possible connections to student outcomes, such as behavioral referrals, suspension rates, and academic achievement for students of color, were explored to determine if any connections exist between CRP-ABAR and outcomes for students of color within a public Montessori setting.

Background

Montessori schools are not immune to institutionalized racism. Like all educational institutions, their very existence perpetuates, even unintentionally, systemic racism. According to critical race theorist Ladson-Billings (2012), "Until educators begin to carefully examine the way race and racialized thinking influence their work, they will continue to perpetuate destructive thinking about the capabilities of learners based on race" (p. 115).

In this research study, the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators were examined toward CRP-ABAR in three urban public Montessori schools and the

possible connection to student outcomes, such as behavioral referrals, suspension rates, and academic achievement for students of color. The questions guiding the research study follow:

1. How does CRP-ABAR curriculum operate in three urban public Montessori schools? What are some best practices?

2. How do CRP-ABAR curricula in Montessori schools affect parents' perceptions?

3. In urban Montessori schools, utilizing CRP-ABAR curricula, what are the connections between teachers' perceptions and outcomes for their students of color?

4. How does implementing CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools impact behavioral referrals, suspension rates, and academic outcomes, such as proficiency levels for high-stakes testing in reading and mathematics for students of color? What are some of the challenges?

The conduit in this study for a further exploration of possible links for students of color in Montessori settings using CRP and ABAR curricula was to conduct qualitative case studies. This research study involved three schools that have been identified as having both high fidelity implementation of Montessori and a commitment to ABAR and CRP through evidence, both in the classroom and throughout the school community. The schools participating had enrollments of more than 50% students of color. This percentage is in line with the national average for children in public schools. Focus groups of parents and staff were utilized to provide greater insight into the challenges and benefits of implementing CRP and ABAR in the Montessori-prepared environment. A study, such as this, may reveal benefits to students at the three schools in this study and

best practices that might be replicated in all Montessori schools, but particularly those with more than 50% of the populations of students of color.

Significance of the Study

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the 2013 Nation's Report Card, Black and Hispanic students are lagging behind White students in reading test scores. After an examination of the data, educators are faced with a consistent and troubling trend: Black and Hispanic students continue to lag behind their White peers in reading and mathematics (Nation's Report Card, 2013, 2015).

Several major factors appear to contribute to the gap in students' academic achievement levels: teachers' rejection, unfair competition, mass teaching, low expectations, and low academic performance (Abington-Pitre, 2015). According to Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011), there is a negative perception of African American children and an invalidation of their culture that has led to apathy, academic disengagement, and school discontent. Sampson and Garrison-Wade maintained that characteristics, such as collectivity, engagement, sharing, and respect, are often devoid in the educational settings; yet, these are values that are central to the home life and community interactions of African Americans. To raise academic performance among children of color, one suggestion is that teachers must become more culturally responsive and the curriculum must become more inclusive (Garza & Garza, 2010).

In addition to teachers becoming more culturally responsive and the curriculum becoming more inclusive, there needs to be a paradigm shift in public opinion and public policy to render any serious progress toward raising the academic achievement among children of color. Valant and Newark (2016) conducted a study entitled *The Politics of*

Achievement Gaps: U.S. Opinion on Race-Based and Wealth-Based Differences in Test Scores. After a random sampling of the American public, it was found that there is more concern about wealth-based test score gaps than race- or ethnicity-based gaps. Because there is a reluctance to address the issue solely on the basis of race, many proposals for closing gaps require action from policymakers and policymakers' actions depend on the public's views (Valant & Newark, 2016). Valant and Newark reported, "For example, 64% of Americans adults say it is essential or a high priority to close the poor-wealthy test score gap, whereas only 36% and 31% say the same about the Black-White gap and the Hispanic-White gap respectively" (pp. 331-332). This does not mean that social economics do not play a role in student achievement, but until the underpinnings of institutional racism is tackled, this issue will remain unresolved (Valant & Newark, 2016). This is a quandary because unless public opinion shifts, there appears to be little hope of policymakers instituting substantial changes to the trajectory of closing the achievement and opportunity gap (Valant & Newark, 2016).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework used for these qualitative case studies is the critical race theory (CRT), which is the conceptual foundation for examining inequities in public education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). To understand the concept of the CRT, and its connection to CRP-ABAR, one must be aware of the foundations of the U.S. Constitution and landmark Supreme Court cases that have cemented racism and White supremacy in the U.S. institutions and throughout American society. The outcomes of the U.S. governmental framework and landmark cases have resulted in the perpetuation of educational inequalities in the way that educational policy decisions are made, executed,

and maintained (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016).

According to Ladson-Billings (2016), the practices and beliefs were that Blacks and other people of color were inferior even before the creation of the United States of America. After the American Revolution in 1776, those same beliefs and practices were written into the U.S. Constitution and the laws. As an example, the U.S. Constitution protected the institution of slavery and counted Blacks as three fifths of a person. The highest court in the land ruled in the Dred Scott decision that affirmed that a runaway slave must be returned to that slave's owner. According to Ladson-Billings, "African Americans, thus, represent a unique form of citizen in the USA–property transformed into citizen" (p. 23). When the court ruled on Scott, it was reinforcing the concept that slavery and people as property were a legitimate status for African Americans.

Ladson-Billings (2016) reported that later in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court once again denied full citizenship rights to African Americans "as a way to asset White property rights–rights to use and enjoy and the absolute right to exclude" (p. 23). These practices were in place to protect the interests of the White male landowners, hence the ruling class. These laws along with others have made it an uphill battle to try to dismantle some of the institutionalized roadblocks that have perpetuated inequitable opportunities for people of color, including an inequitable educational system (Taylor et al., 2016).

Even *Brown v. Board of Education* has come under scrutiny by proponents of the CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Tushnet, 2016). It has not lived up to its promise to be a conveyance for an equal opportunity for children of color to receive a quality education. The frustration with the lack of real progress in terms of housing, employment, health,

and education propelled CRT scholars to challenge the legal and educational systems to fulfill the promise of the American dream.

Critical race theorists (Bell, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Leonardo, 2013; Taylor et al., 2016) used an analytical lens to examine the ways that racism pervades the curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. First, the curriculum has been designed to uphold and maintain a White supremacist narrative; second, the instructional strategies are based on a cultural deficit theory; third, assessments are culturally biased and seek to legitimize cultural deficiency under the guise of scientific objectivity; and, fourth, the school funding is viewed as a function of institutional and structural racism, which results in inadequate resources for most schools housing children of color. These CRT scholars further argued that desegregation has been promoted only in ways that are advantageous to Whites.

The CRT as a theoretical framework includes an acknowledgement that there are objective facts and subjective stories. Some of the facts follow: minority children lack sufficient resources, suffer high rates of poverty, and study in dilapidated buildings. These are facts that the CRT scholars (Bell, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Leonardo, 2013; Taylor et al., 2016) acknowledged. Leonardo (2013) further extrapolated that these hard data are narrative in structure for two reasons:

> One, minority-filled schools evolved the way they have because of the stories surrounding the lives of their student population and what they deserve in terms of resources. The leading and lingering tropes from explanatory frameworks, such as the culture of poverty, deficit thinking, and general educability of minority students, produce material consequences that are now social facts. Two, material

> differences between underperforming and over-performing schools feed into the same stories and feedback loop that put them there in the first place when the power of narratives is not appreciated. (p. 603)

It is a fact that Black and Hispanic children are falling behind their White counterparts in standardized testing in both reading and mathematics (Nation's Report Card, 2015). Sometimes Black and Hispanic children may even believe the deficit stories about themselves, but, according to Leonardo (2013), "that they created their own predicament, even as they may help reproduce it, is like saying that the impoverished life of the slave is his own doing" (p. 604). Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) stated, "CRT acknowledges the power, privilege, and inequities inherent in society, and specifically in school settings that impact the miseducation of African American children" (p. 282). Montessori, a child-centered pedagogy, may be seen by many to help address these inequalities that critical race theorists uncovered.

If Montessori education is to move towards greater acceptance within the realms of public education as a viable, effective, research-based curriculum, and an alternative educational pedagogy for students of color, there has to be close examination of its contents and the domains that must be expanded to include teacher training both in CRP and ABAR. The implication is that CRP and ABAR must be implemented beginning in preschool and be continued and sustained throughout the child's educational career. According to the researchers, this may or may not create a trajectory of equitable education for all students. However, an examination of culturally relevant pedagogy and ABAR curriculum in three Montessori schools may provide some insight into the possible connections between CRP and ABAR and parent, teacher, and administrators'

perceptions and students' outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

There is a moderate amount of information on the CRP and ABAR; however, there is limited research on both ABAR and CRP with students of color within a Montessori setting (Debs, 2016c; Hall & Murray, 2011). Brown (2016) demonstrated that African American students in Grade 3 in public Montessori schools when compared to other African American students in traditional schools fared better in reading and math. However, when these same students were compared to other African American students in magnet programs, there was only a slight increase in reading and no significant gain with the math, and no mention of using the CRP or ABAR curriculum in the study. Again, there have been no examinations of the CRP and ABAR curriculum in a Montessori setting for students of color. Nor have there been studies exploring the attitudes of parents and staff who are in public Montessori schools professing to include CRP and ABAR.

Research in the Montessori methodology does not specifically include an explanation of how to become culturally responsive because Montessori claimed the Montessori method was supranational and pointed to the worldwide implementation of the schools (McCormick Rambusch, 2013). In addition, according to the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (as cited in Brown & Steele, 2015), the teacher transformation must include culturally responsive methods for teachers to meet the demands of diverse students in Montessori schools. However, the efficacy of the Montessori teacher training programs providing CRP is ambiguous and evasive (Debs, 2016c).

CRP in Practice

One of the theoretical assumptions of the CRP-ABAR curricula (Ladson Billings, 1999) and Montessori education (Lillard, 2005) is the narrative through which the world is viewed. Storytelling is an important part of the American history and how students may see themselves. However, that story is most often told from a Eurocentric perspective to the exclusion of what other groups have contributed. According to Ladson-Billings (1999) and Leonardo (2013), within the CRT, it is asserted that the Eurocentric story has been told through narrative and they have called it research unlike the stories of non-Europeans that have been dismissed or ignored as folklore. The European story has been utilized to marginalize indigenous groups through omission or misrepresentation of their worldview or inaccuracies of their priorities.

According to Abington-Pitre (2015), culturally responsive teachers and schools that embrace diversity in a positive manner are central to all students' learning. Abington-Pitre affirmed that individual teachers must be willing to respond to parents and members of the community in positive, respectful, and caring ways. The people who have contact with children must be made aware of how their cultural perspectives and prior learning affect their teaching and, as a result, the learning outcomes of those children (Taylor et al., 2016). The Freedom Schools that Jackson (2009) discussed in a study denoted that African American students could be successful in literary skills if they receive instruction from culturally responsive teachers who make their learning relevant through historical exploration and literature representative of the African American experience.

Therefore, it was assumed that all the schools in the study had implemented a CRP and ABAR curriculum for at least 2 years at the time of the study. Fidelity and

commitment were sustained because of ample planning, grade-group collaboration, support, through direct contact with administrators and professional development. The three schools were chosen on the basis of their commitment to CRP and ABAR for at least 2 years, in addition to their high-quality Montessori programs, as evidenced in at least 80% of the teaching staff were accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education or were in the process of obtaining accreditation. School leaders randomly selected parents and staff for the focus groups. If students participated in high-stakes testing, data within the last 3 years were analyzed. In addition, other pertinent archival documents, such as behavioral referrals and suspension rates, were examined to determine if there were any impacts on the outcomes for students of color.

Research Questions

In this study, the perceptions of teachers, parents, and administrators toward CRP-ABAR curricula in Montessori schools and the possible connections, if any, to student outcomes, such as behavioral referrals, suspension rates, and academic outcomes for students of color were examined. The guiding research questions follow:

1. How does CRP-ABAR curriculum operate in three urban public Montessori schools? What are some best practices?

2. How does CRP-ABAR curricula in Montessori schools affect parents' perceptions?

3. In urban Montessori schools, utilizing CRP-ABAR curricula, what are the connections between teachers' perceptions and outcomes for their students of color?

4. How does implementing CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools impact behavioral referrals, suspension rates, and academic outcomes, such as, proficiency levels for high-

stakes testing in reading and mathematics for students of color? What are some of the challenges?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to provide clarity in the use of these terms.

Achievement gap is the difference in academic outcomes between Whites and Blacks as measured in high-stakes testing.

African Americans or *Blacks* refer to students who are classified as African American or Black (non-Hispanic) or biracial by their school system.

Antibias-antiracist (ABAR) supports all children's full development in a multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural world and gives them the tools to stand up to prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and, eventually, institutionalisms.

Biracial is defined as having one parent who is African American or Black.

Conflicted fit is a term used to describe the paradoxical phenomena of Montessori for students of color.

Critical race theory (CRT) is a critical examination of society and culture to the intersection of race, law, power, and education.

Culturally competent teachers foster equitable outcomes for all students and result in the identification and provision of services that are responsive to issues of race, culture, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) empowers students intellectually, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Essential elements rubric is a tool for measuring Montessori fidelity and

sustainability provided by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

Global majority includes Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and people of mixed-racial heritage and anyone who is not of European descent.

Latino refers to people living in the United States who are of Latin American heritage, which may include Indian, African, and Spanish heritage.

Latinx is a gender-neutral nonbinary term often used in lieu of Latino or Latina.

Liberatory education consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information.

Microaggression theory refers to the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.

Montessori method is an educational approach and methodology characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural, psychological, physical, and social development.

Multicultural education refers to an inclusive educational experience that includes students from diverse racial and ethnic groups, gender identities, exceptional students, or all socioeconomic groups in order that they experience equal educational opportunities.

Opportunity gap refers to the disparity in access to quality schools and the resources needed for all children to be academically successful.

People of color include groups in the United States and other nations who have experienced discrimination historically because of their unique biological characteristics that enabled people to identify them easily. African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics in the United States are among the groups referred to as people of colo*r.*

White fragility, according to DiAngelo (2018), is a state in which even a

minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, trigging a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions, such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors, such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress induced situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate White racial equilibrium.

White supremacy is an ideology within a political and socioeconomic system where White people enjoy structural advantages over other non-Whites.

Organization of Study

This study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter provided information on the background of the problem, the rationale for the study, the theoretical framework for the research, and the assumptions of the study. The focus of Chapter II was a review of related literature about CRP and ABAR within a Montessori context. The third chapter included a description of the methodology of data collection and analysis, limitations, and delimitations of the study. The fourth chapter highlighted a summary of the results, and the fifth chapter feature a discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature included an exploration of a brief history of how social scientists, researchers, and educators addressed the inequities in education as they relate to students of color. Deficit thinking theory, multiculturalism, Afrocentrism, CRP, ABAR, and Montessori pedagogies are discussed in this chapter, as well as the paramount importance of the teacher's role. Examples of successful educational programs, including limited studies on CRP and ABAR, are reviewed.

According to Solorzano and Yosso (2016), a historical context is necessary to thoroughly examine the way communities of color have been systematically discriminated against and how dominant White culture has sustained its racial superiority. Solorzano and Yosso maintained that the underpinnings of White supremacy embedded in the U.S. educational institutions stemmed from social Darwinism and eugenics, which later evolved to theories of cultural and economic deprivation. Too often, cultural and economic deprivation theories adhered to the status quo when evaluating both social-emotional and academic outcomes for students of color.

Theories, such as deficit thinking, cultural deficit, and genetic inferiority, are rooted in racist ideologies. These theories and racist practices date back to slavery and were further legitimized in 1916 when Termin revised Binet's test and renamed it Stanford Binet. These mental ability tests were then purposefully used to promote bias testing outcomes for African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexicans (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2016; Bell, 2016; Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic and Minority Interests, 2016; Solorzano & Yosso, 2016).

In the 1960s, social scientists, such as Bloome, Davis, Hess, and Bettlehime, and educators began to label children who were not White and middle class as culturally deprived or culturally disadvantaged (Ladson-Billings, 2014). This, in turn, meant that poor, non-White children were viewed as somehow lacking or defective; hence, the theory of deficit thinking emerged. The premise was that because these poor, non-White children lacked socialization and cultural resources, the school's primary function was to compensate for these deficits (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Contributing to the deficit thinking theory was Riessman's (1962) *The Culturally Deprived Child*, a book that influenced many teachers and other educators to view poor and non-White students as culturally deprived. Eventually, even Riessman was aware of the problematic nature of the term *culturally deprived*. Nevertheless, Riessman's text supported the premise that White, middle-class, cultural expression was the norm or correct way of behaving in school (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Based on the combined 75 years or more of educational experience, the researchers conducting this study believe that many educators continue to focus on the students and their families as the source of the problem, rather than the educational system. As a result, many public school educators and administrators who are typically White operate from a deficit-thinking perspective about children of color (Garza & Garza, 2010; Gay, 2000).

According to Banks and McGee Banks (2016), even in the present educational arena, ramifications of Termin's work has far-reaching effects because the public school system still uses these tests to measure intelligence and identify gifted-talented students. According to Musu-Gillette, de Brey, McFarland, Hussar, and Sonnenberg (2017), it may also explain in part the overrepresentation of Blacks and Hispanics in special education

classes.

Nieto and Bode (2008) claimed that theories about cultural depravation and even genetic inferiority were once again being used to explain the differences in academic achievement of Whites as compared to children of color. This hypothesis is problematic for several reasons. Nieto and Bode inferred that it was promoting racial superiority and alleviating all the responsibility from the schools and teachers, while putting the blame on the students. Nieto and Bode emphasized the premise:

> Students' identities–that is, their sense of self based in part on their race, ethnicity, social class, and language, among other characteristics–can also have an impact on their academic success or failure, but it is not these characteristics *per se* that cause success or failure. Rather it is the school's *perception* of students' language, culture, and class as *inadequate* and *negative*, and thus the devalued status of these characteristics in the academic environment, that help explain school failure. (p. 272)

The CRP offers an alternative to deficit thinking. Currently, educational research scholars are looking to examine more closely how CRP-ABAR can be implemented to understand how historically educational practices have impacted-impeded learning outcomes for students of color.

CRP: Then and Now

Throughout American history, there has been a clarion call for justice, equality, and upward social mobility (Beach, 2007). For many Americans whose ancestors were European immigrants, the indicator of social advancement was education. Many people of color attest to a different story. Instead, they have had to fight and create their own

procurement through political movements that necessitated the acquisition of the most basic human rights (Beach, 2007).

During slavery, it was illegal to educate slaves: Anyone engaging in such activities would be fined and considered a lawbreaker (Cobb, 2011). In 1831, after the infamous slave rebellion led by Turner, the governor of Virginia, Floyd, blamed the Black preachers for teaching slaves to read in Sunday school and, as a reprisal of the uprising, banned Black churches (Cobb, 2011).

Cobb (2011) continued to examine events in history during the brief (less than a decade) postemancipation era, known as Reconstruction. After the Civil War, the Black legislators of the south were the first to create tax-supported public schools. Unfortunately, as federal protections abated, White supremacists regained power to institute a direct attack on any progress that had been augmented by way of education for Blacks, known as redemption. By the closing of the 19th century, many Whites in power were advocating to obliterate any type of education for Blacks, even if that education was inferior to that of Whites (Cobb, 2011).

Cobb (2011) further declared that the early 20th century fared just as poorly as the preceding time when it came to the education of Blacks by echoing the Black intellectual Woodson who professed there was an even more obscene attack on Blacks than denying them an education. This pervasiveness was masked in an educational content that promoted Black inferiority and perpetuated a systematic, deliberate machinery to keep Blacks from becoming liberated through a means of a democratic equitable education even in the urban areas of the north. One of the movements in education to address these inequities for students of color was multicultural education.

Multicultural education came about in the 1960s because of the Civil Rights Movement. Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and others demanded their stories be told. The result was that many ethnic courses were established across university campuses. In the haste to address the needs of non-White students in public schools, multicultural education was in some instances reduced to celebrations of ethnic holidays and customs primarily through songs, food, and art (Banks & McGee Banks, 2016).

Some proponents of the CRT believed hegemonic liberal multicultural education tends to depoliticize and reduce differences to celebrations that ignore racial inequity and, at the same time, make Eurocentric the norm (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2011). Multicultural education is also problematic to some supporters of Afrocentric education, including Shockley (2007), because it might eclipse the critical identity work that is so important for African American children to achieve emotionally, socially, and academically.

According to Shockley (2007), "education reform efforts (such as modern multiculturalism) are not strong enough solutions to end what Afrocentric educators call Black self-hatred and community powerlessness" (p. 104). Children of color must first understand self and their culture before they are ready to learn about other cultures. It is necessary to understand the relationship between the child and others. The Afrocentric theory upholds that cultural relevancy in a broader multicultural context is not a prerequisite for academic success for African American students. An infusion of Afrocentric education in the curriculum is necessary if African American students are to achieve a measure of self-worth, self-esteem, self-identity, and academic success (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Shockley, 2007). According to Banks and McGee Banks (2016),

multicultural education will remain superficial and ineffective if it does not have an ABAR focus.

However, multicultural education can have a positive impact on student achievement if implemented comprehensively because it includes consideration for the languages, customs, values, and experiences of all students–not just the dominant culture. Multicultural education can support what all sound educational pedagogy professes to do and that is to use the experiences of their students as a basis for further learning and developing critical thinking skills. This education could go beyond adjusting to the changing demographics of the U.S. holiday celebrations and monthly curriculum focus on Black History or Hispanic Heritage months. Multicultural education is an attempt to become an effective tool for creating students who will become globally responsive to the increasing interdependence befalling students in the 21st century (Banks & McGee Banks, 2016).

The CRP can be the bridge to the claims where multiculturalism falls short. In the seminal work, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested that CRP "must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483). The Freedom Schools mentioned briefly in Chapter I were an example of applying these principles of CRP, even before they were defined in academia.

Examining the Freedom Schools both historically and contemporarily supplants the idea that students of color are inherently destined for failure. The Freedom Schools evolved from a political movement to mobilize ordinary Black citizens to register to vote,

but later became much more comprehensive than one single endeavor (Jackson, 2009). This daunting task of acquiring basic voter rights came with serious repercussions, including unlawful arrests, police brutality, and loss of lives. In order to achieve this ambitious goal of voter registration, African Americans needed a curriculum that would empower them, while providing basic literacy skills, African American history, and analytical and critical thinking in the form of questioning (Emery, Braselmann, & Reid Gold, 2004). According to Emery et al. (2004),

> All three sections of the Freedom School Curriculum–the Academic Curriculum, the Citizenship Curriculum, and a Recreational Curriculum–were intended to promote the following principles: 1. The school is an agent of social change. 2. Students must know their own history. 3. The curriculum should be linked to the student's experience. 4. Questions should be open-ended. 5. Developing academic skills is crucial. (p. 6)

Cobb, the secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, came up with the idea to use the summer volunteers who had participated in sit-ins, voter registration drives, and other social activists' protests, as well as educators from some of the most reputable universities in the north to become the facilitators or teachers of the program. They also brought in Baker, executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Clark, an activist with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, along with educators representing the United Federation of Teachers, and the notable professor Lynd of Spellman College to help design the curriculum and provide teacher training (Emery et al., 2004).

In the paper, *Lessons of Freedom Summer*, Emery (2004) reported, "Freedom

Schools remain the best if not only example of an alternative school movement that was given structural support by a social movement" (p. 3). Emery argued that corporate business leaders did not subordinate these schools, mandating their own agenda while controlling funding. Instead, the Freedom Schools evolved into examples of institutional, educational reform where curriculum and pedagogy served the needs of the community and its stakeholders, while obtaining a political means that gave students multiple opportunities. As the protagonists of social change, Freedom Schools encouraged students to learn, acquire academic skills, and understand contemporary issues and critique laws and policies directly affecting their communities.

The Freedom Schools, as noted by Cobb (2011), one of the original organizers, might not have addressed all the inequities so pervasively in the public education system of the south in just a 6-week summer program; however, it undoubtedly changed the course of history. The program prepared Blacks to see that they too deserved opportunities and possibilities, consequently, further invigorating the Civil Rights Movement.

The brief historical overview highlighted many notable achievements gained from the Freedom Schools movement, even after the summer of 1964, including changing public school curriculum to include African American history and literature, and demanding a more rigorous curriculum that would prepare Blacks to go to college as opposed to the vocational tracking imposed on most Black students.

The example of the Freedom Schools can be associated with a transformative approach to learning otherwise coined as CRP. Perhaps the best practices derived from the historical Freedom Schools can be duplicated to avoid hegemonic learning practices,

and augment new possibilities for success with students of color. Afterall, the Freedom Schools epitomizes the notion of CRP, as suggested by Canzoneri-Golden and King (2016), which is that CRP

> empowers students intellectually, emotionally, and critically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. . . . [Canzoneri-Golden and King] suggested the Freedom schools that Jackson discussed in the 2009 study elucidated that African American students could be successful in literary skills if they receive instruction from culturally responsive teachers who make their learning relevant through historical exploration and literature representative of the African American experience. (pp. 12-13)

One example that Jackson (2009) highlighted was the work of Edelman, the founder of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools program. According to the CDF Freedom Schools Program (2017), "Since 1995, more than 137,000 Pre-K to 12 children have had a CDF Freedom Schools experience and more than 16,000 college students and young adult staff have been trained to deliver this empowering model."

On the CDF program web site, the primary mission of the CDF Freedom Schools program is to provide summer and after-school enrichment to primarily children of color from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. By infusing a culturally relevant curriculum, they promote a radical agenda—that students will fall in love with reading, increase their self-esteem, and foster positive attitudes toward themselves and their communities.

One of the cornerstones of the CDF Freedom Schools academic program is the integrated reading curriculum. The teaching staff members carefully select books that are relevant to the narratives of the African American and Latinx students served by the

program. When these children can see themselves mirrored in the characters and scenes they study, they are more likely to be interested and engaged. Furthermore, they begin to make connections with their past, linking it to their present, and projecting themselves into a brighter future. Books, activities, and field trips are specially designed to allow students to express their cultural diversity and individuality (CDF Freedom Schools Program, 2017).

Underlying the concept of cultural relevancy pedagogy is academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge and fluency in at least one other culture. Sociopolitical consciousness is the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems (Ladson-Billings 2014).

Culturally Responsive Teachers

An indispensable component of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in classrooms is having teachers who are skilled to do it effectively. Irvine (2003) stated,

> Teachers of color are essential in our schools because, like all other teachers, they teach who they are. They teach through a lens of cultural experiences that is different from the lens of mainstream teachers. Teachers of color bring to teaching a situated pedagogy. How they make meaning within their classrooms, how they define their teaching roles, and the articulation of their beliefs are contextually and culturally dependent. Most important, their situated pedagogy and culturally specific teaching behaviors and beliefs seem related to the achievement of students of color. (p. 58)

There is a compelling correlation between effective teachers of color adopting the teaching strategy of transfer (Delpit, 1995). Transfer is when teachers use their students' everyday experiences to connect to new concepts, bridging the gap between their cultural knowledge to the new material being presented (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Paris (2016) stated,

> We must not be focused solely on White middle class teachers who are teaching materially poor communities of color as this would indeed be a privileging of Whiteness as the gaze through which learning to teach is filtered. [Paris suggested that there needs to be more teachers of color and we need to support them. In this way,] it is not always relating to students across differences which is in many ways a White-centered framing. (p. 9)

However, it is important that we also focus on teaching within cultural communities as well.

The nationwide public school teacher pool is 82% White (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017) similarly, the public Montessori teachers are also disproportionately White (Debs & Brown, 2016). Former U.S. Department of Education (2016) Secretary J. B. King, Jr., speaking at Howard University, March 8, 2016, stated in part:

> Without question when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18% of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act. . . . We have strong evidence that students of color benefit from having teachers and leaders who look like them as role models. . . . it is also important for our White students to see teachers of color in leadership roles in their classrooms and communities.

Tatum (2007) conveyed the importance of the role a teacher plays and questioned the willingness to engage in self-reflection about one's personal racial biases to fully understand the implications of assaulting narratives teachers impose on students without awareness. Tatum encouraged teachers, regardless of their racial backgrounds, to "be willing to learn deeply about the lives of their students in their full cultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical contexts in order to affirm their identities authentically–with identity stories of hope and empowerment" (p. 27).

Tatum (2007) reported the work of renowned critical race theorist, Ladson-Billing's *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children,* where Tatum recounted both Black and White teachers who worked effectively with their urban African American students. Tatum emphasized that it was not the particular teaching styles per se that made them efficient with their students, but rather they shared a demonstrable respect for their students and their families that extended to the communities from where the children came. Consequently, a sense of trust was acquired among the teacher, students, and their families. Once trust was established, the business of teaching became plausible (Tatum, 2007).

Abington-Pitre (2015) contended the people who have contact with our children must be made aware of how their cultural perspectives and prior learning affect their teaching and, as a result, affect our children and their learning outcomes. The research included indications that developing ways to teach subject matter, infusing CRP for students of color may improve academic achievement (Abington-Pitre, 2015; Hyland, 2010; Jackson, 2009; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011). Jackson (2009) claimed culturally responsive teaching has shown promise of raising academic achievement for

students of color. Jackson further asserted that it is imperative for teachers' preparation programs to prepare culturally responsive teachers to promote social, cultural, and historical awareness to raise academic achievement.

To become culturally relevant, teachers, regardless of their racial or ethnic background, need to prepare lessons that take into account the values and experiences of the students they wish to influence or motivate (Leonard, Moore, & Brooks, 2013). Saathoff (2013) believed teachers must acquire these skills while in teacher training. Saathoff suggested, "It is beneficial for preservice teachers to be exposed to ways that allow them to question their own beliefs" (p. 31). Credited with bringing the CRT to educational research, Ladson-Billings (2016) contested how culture is used to explain everything from behavioral problems to academic failure emphasizing the need of preservice teachers to expand their views about culture within an educational framework.

Studies in CRP

There has been promising research linking the theory of CRP to its effectiveness in practice. A 2010 study included quantitative data about Hawaiian students indicating that culture-based educational strategies positively impact student outcomes. The study by Kana'iaupuni, Ledward, and Jenson (2010) involved a survey of 600 teachers, approximately 3,000 students, and a slightly lower number of parents from 62 schools. Some of the best practices aligned with culturally relevant strategies were active participation of family members in educational activities, using the community as a setting for student learning, rigorous assessments accounting for a range of competences and skills, and place-based and service learning projects promoting community well-being; and career planning and preparation for global citizenship. When teachers' use of

culture-based educational strategies were implemented, there was a positive correlation to student social-emotional well-being (e.g., identity, self-efficacy, social relationships) and math and reading test scores (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010).

Another example of research in the area of CRP is an ethnic study course developed by the San Francisco Unified School District. One of the components of the course was CRP. According to Dee and Penner (2016), the teachers used the methods designed to build on and honor the students' cultural assets, experiences, and perspectives; develop their critical consciousness; and create authentic caring academic environments.

Dee and Penner (2016) completed the study over several years on the effects of a ninth-grade ethnic study course for students on the margin of assignment on several proximate academic outcomes (i.e., attendance, grade point average, credits earned). A regression discontinuity design was used to compare outcomes among students whose eighth-grade GPA placed them below versus just above the threshold of 2.0. The ethnic study participation increased student attendance by 21 percentage points, cumulative ninth-grade GPA by 1.4 grade points and credits earned by 23 credits. The GPA gains were higher for boys than for girls. In addition, there were higher gains in math and science than in language arts (Dee & Penner, 2016).

The two above studies included support for the premise that culturally relevant teachers teach from the students' cultural perspective. By implementing CRP practices, students are empowered intellectually, emotionally, and politically. The CRP also uses cultural referents to impart knowledge. Cultural referents are not vehicles for explaining the dominant culture but are important aspects of the curriculum in their own right.

Culturally relevant teachers respond to students in a positive and caring manner (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). Some of the debate around CRP is that it is not static and needs to evolve as populations become more diverse.

CRP: Fluid, Not Static

Credited with coining the term *CRP* based on Ladson-Billings' work to improve teacher education for teachers of African American students in urban schools, Ladson-Billings (2014) believed that a newer, fresher version of cultural relevancy that meets the needs of today's students should be explored. Ladson-Billings attempted to move from the culturally relevant to a culturally sustaining pedagogy. Ladson-Billings declared a personal growth of increasing dissatisfaction with what "seems to be the static conception of what it means to be culturally relevant" (p. 79). Ladson-Billings maintained that cultural relevancy is fluid. It is forever changing and not always easily recognized (e.g., youth culture). Ladson-Billings urged educators who subscribe to CRP to make the transition to culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Ladson-Billings (2014) maintained that culturally sustaining pedagogy has a focus on one racial or ethnic group, as well as the global identities emerging in the arts, literature, music, athletics, and films. This moves individuals to a more complex and fluid interpretation of what it means to be culturally relevant. Paris and Alim (2014) agreed with Ladson-Billings that cultural and community practices should be honored and sustained. However, they believed there should be a critical eye to ensure regressive racist and biases are not perpetuated even among the students of the global majority. The goal should be to raise a critical consciousness. The ABAR curriculum and practices may in fact be the crucible to invigorating CRP to become fluid in an ever-changing world and

to creating a collective, critical consciousness that manifests change toward a more equitable and just society.

ABAR Curriculum

Teachers of ABAR, similar to CRP, use instructional strategies that could enhance learning. The ABAR practice in schools, developed in the late 1980s, was designed to build off elements missing in both multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy. While both were designed to support and nurture students of color, some researchers and practitioners contended that students were missing the critical analysis of how power and race function in society, such as the idea of race as a social construct used to justify slavery. Successful ABAR teachers use materials and curricula that reflect students' backgrounds, needs, and interests. While most teachers in the United States are White and middle class, the student population is increasingly becoming more non-White. Many new teachers are ill-prepared to work effectively with these children and their families (Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008; Nganga, 2015).

According to Nganga (2015), both elements of CRP and ABAR are necessary in preservice teacher education programs. Teacher education programs may be the key to preparing teachers to become culturally responsive to the needs of their students. Because the majority of teachers in public school are White and many have not encountered racial oppression or discrimination, it is critical for teacher education programs to use a curriculum that prepares educators to work for diversity (Lin et al., 2008; Nganga, 2015). Studies included findings that multicultural literature can be used to inform students about other cultures and help counter stereotypes. It is also essential for educators to examine their positions and take risks by being receptive to conversations about

inequality and race issues. Nganga (2015) suggested the use of "culturally responsive antibias curriculum can help children to resist incorrect messages about themselves and others" (p. 4). According to Nganga, it would be beneficial for preservice teachers' education programs to incorporate a curriculum to help future educators develop the knowledge and skills that will be needed to apply CRP and ABAR.

An ABAR curriculum would include the tools by which preservice teachers can confront bigotry and racism and develop an awareness of discriminatory practices and examine the effects of their beliefs, attitudes, and expectations on their future pupils. The teacher preparation programs should prepare preservice teachers to examine their beliefs and values relating to children of diverse races, gender, class, home language, or disability. Through this examination, the teacher candidate hopefully will gain greater insight into how personal attitudes and expectations can affect learner outcomes (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2002; Lin et al., 2008; Nganga, 2015).

Developing inclusive attitudes and environments support the goal of ABAR curriculum to model for children respect and acceptance for all people. Children at an early age are aware and develop perceptions about their place in society based on how they are treated. Children develop racial awareness and attitudes about skin color, race, gender, language, family structure, and abilities from the people in their environment (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2002; Farago, 2017; Lin et al., 2008; Nganga, 2015). By implementing CRP and ABAR activities in early childhood classrooms, students can learn to appreciate and respect the differences and identify with the similarities that unite them with their peers. Simangan (2012) conducted a study that supported the hypothesis that implementing a 4-week CRP-ABAR curricula increased a student's ability to

represent that student's classmates in a drawing of the classroom community, indicating an increased awareness to one's peers.

Nganga (2015) documented the effects of culturally responsive and ABAR instructional materials and strategies on preservice teachers' beliefs and practices about culturally responsive ABAR education. Nganga's research had a focus on the teaching and learning outcomes and purposefully selected literature that challenged traditional works used in the course. The study had an aim to explore the perceptions of preservice teachers to a culturally responsive, ABAR, early childhood curriculum, and how implementing such a curriculum in course work might influence those perceptions. The participants were provided both preteaching and postteaching open-ended questions.

The data were analyzed qualitatively and revealed that preservice teachers had a superficial understanding of ABAR curriculum. However, postteaching data showed that after experiencing culturally responsive curriculum, preservice teachers developed a better understanding of ABAR curriculum and gained essential self-awareness in diversity contexts. In addition, after being exposed to culturally responsive ABAR materials, the participants developed a desire to promote social justice for their students. As a result, Nganga (2015) suggested, "when equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, it is probable that all preservice teachers can be more culturally responsive educators" (p. 13).

While White educators and parents are less likely to address issues of race compared to educators and parents of color (Farago, 2017), the role of early childhood educators is indispensable to an ABAR education. Children at an early age learn in concrete terms; therefore, unfairness, racism, and sexism should be explicitly taught.

According to Pollock (2006), race is a social construct and race categories were developed in the 15th century to facilitate slavery and colonial expansion. Before that time, there was not the conception of race. Consequently, the ABAR curriculum includes requirements for affirmations that no race group is more or less intelligent than any other. Pollock further contended that an ABAR curriculum involves learning proactively that there are no genetically differences among humans, only minor physical differences and social practices that have developed over the centuries.

Pollock (2006) stated that racism involved accepting as normal unequal opportunities and racially patterned disparities based on unequally measuring human worth and intelligence along racial lines. At the preschool and kindergarten levels, children are not fully aware of themselves as members of a group outside of their families. Although they are aware of differences, they are still in the process of learning what is authentic and what is not. According to Greco, Priest, and Paradies (2010), it is critical that ABAR be addressed in the schools because evidence indicated discrimination and racism "impact negatively on education, social and health outcomes for those from minority groups during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood" (p. 6).

According to the article, "Social Justice in Early Childhood: What the Research Tells Us," Hyland (2010) attempted to examine race, class, sexual orientation, and gender of marginalized preschool students. Hyland observed how the practices of equity, pedagogy, and culturally relevant teaching could address the negative outcomes these children face because of the Eurocentered curriculum. These values and beliefs are imposed upon them throughout their educational experiences (Hyland, 2010). Hyland reported, "Equity pedagogy assumes that if teachers and schools do not consciously

attempt to counter injustice, then by default, they support it" (p. 83). Hyland then denoted that the two practices, critical pedagogy and cultural relevant teaching, can address the inequities in the classroom.

One of the challenges Hyland (2010) mentioned is that empirical research is limited as it pertains to pedagogical practices promoting CRP and ABAR curriculum in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Educators, including Montessori, have proclaimed the paramount importance of early childhood education as an essential vehicle in the advancement of humanity. Montessori is a child-centered pedagogy coined with the phrase 'follow the child'; however, there is limited research on CRP and ABAR within a Montessori context at any grade level. With a steady number of Blacks, an increasing number of Latinx, and lower socioeconomic students within the public Montessori school population, the research community in Montessori, according to Brown and Steel (2015), is calling for more empirical studies in the area of Montessori and student outcomes for students of color. It is the contention of these researchers that Montessori education, accompanied by ABAR and CRP, may be a viable alternative to transform the trajectory of education for students of color.

Montessori's Alignment With CRP-ABAR

Montessori was an Italian physician and the first woman in her native country to hold that title. Montessori later became an educator and founder of the Montessori method, an educational pedagogy that brought Montessori both international acclaim and a host of opponents of her theories. In 1907, Montessori was commissioned by a real estate group in Rome who was renovating a housing project for the economically, underserved in the slums of Rome to create a Children's House to ensure that the young

children residing there would not vandalize the building. Montessori had previously been successful with children who by today's standards would have been considered students with exceptionalities. Montessori visited these institutionalized children and created instruments, later called didactic materials to elicit their responses. Montessori realized that these institutionalized children, despite their disabilities, were not empty vessels confined by their intellectual limitations, but in fact could and did learn (Lillard, 2005; McCormick Rambusch, 2013; McFarland & McFarland, 2011).

Through personal extensive observation of children, Montessori's theories on how they learn were formulated and refined to include specific components, which follow:

1. Children learn through a prepared environment carefully structured by the teacher. Montessori facilitated learning that is developmentally appropriate, where there is liberty for the child to choose that individual work.
2. There are specific planes of development that are identified within a 3-year cycle.
3. The child's mind is the most absorbent during the first 6 years of life.
4. Children are innate learners who construct themselves through their work.
5. There are sensitive periods that are dependent upon the preceding period, where academic learning is optimal, but also social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development occurs.

Although these five principles are grounded in theories of best practices for early childhood education, there is no evidence that they are linked to CRP-ABAR practices in and of themselves.

Researchers are only beginning to directly link Montessori to CRP and ABAR

education (Ansari & Winsler, 2014; Banks & Maixmer, 2016; Stansbury, 2014). Banks and Maixner (2016) examined the role of administrators and parents in creating equitable educational environments and specifically how Social Justice Education can be used as a framework in public Montessori schools. The Banks and Maixner study added to the understanding of how Montessori education can work in concert with Social Justice Education, but has its limitations. One of the limitations was the bulk of the respondents were White. Banks and Maixner suggested that future research on urban or public Montessori schools make extensive efforts to over sample families of color. Ansari and Winsler (2014) conducted a study in Miami Dade County Florida with low social economic Black and Latino 4-year-olds. The study was a comparison between Montessori and High Scope. Although both groups made significant gains, the Latino students exhibited the greatest gains in Montessori. What is missing from this finding is a CRP-ABAR component that might help shed some light on why one group might show more gains than another.

The Stansbury (2014) study had a focus on exploring how the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents of students' ethnicity or race impact the Montessori education experience of students of color. In the study, Stansbury uncovered several implications for Montessori practices and students of color. As an example, Stansbury revealed that there were cultural clashes in the two Montessori magnet schools under study between students of color and their teachers. Stansbury noted an incongruent relationship with students of color whose cultural values, collaboration, and direct behavioral management techniques collided with the European Montessori model of teaching that had a focus on independence and self-directing of behavior. Finally, the

study also had an emphasis on the need for Montessori schools to improve their outcomes for students of color by providing teachers with ABAR and CRP practices in their Montessori training. As a result of the studies discussed, more research in the intersection of Montessori, CRP, and ABAR is needed as Montessori student populations become more heterogeneous.

Montessori and the Role of Teachers

Montessori suggested that the teacher go through an inner transformation. This process could very well support CRP-ABAR practices if teachers are willing to dismantle their own implicit and explicit biases, grounded in White supremacy. Montessori demanded that preservice teachers receive a scrupulous moral training. Montessori stated that one of the obvious failings of education was a result of poor, inadequate, simplistic teacher training. For Montessori, educating the whole child required a transformation of the teacher (Wolf, 1996). Standing (1957) reported that Montessori believed that for teachers to be successful with students, "teachers should go through an inner spiritual preparation–cultivate certain aptitudes in the moral order" (p. 298). According to the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (as cited in Brown & Steele, 2015), the teacher transformation must include culturally responsive methods for teachers to meet the demands of diverse students in Montessori schools.

Research in the Montessori methodology does not specifically include an explanation of how to become culturally responsive. McCormick Rambusch (2013) documented that although Montessori is found in many different countries and despite the classical Montessori base upon which all are founded, they vary greatly from culture to culture and country to country. Any culturally relevant Montessori class must reflect the

basic national assumptions upon which education is based. In a Montessori setting, teachers can create and tailor materials that are culturally relevant to meet the specific needs of their students; however, they may not always do it (Debs, 2016c).

Montessori and Diversity

> According to McCormick Rambusch (2013),
>
> any teacher who enters a class of students brings not only the sum of herself and her personal attitudes, she brings conscious ideas about what ought to be placed in the environment in order that certain reactions be assured in the children with whom she is working. (p. 67)

Montessori advocated for teachers to develop self-understanding so that they would not misinterpret children's needs to align with their own needs (Lillard, 2005).

To build a stronger Montessori movement (Ungerer, 2013), at the time, the executive director of AMS, recommended a group of principles to enhance diversity and inclusiveness in Montessori globally. These principles included celebrating diversity as positives, removing barriers and stereotypes, respecting differences in others, and preparing Montessori teachers for a more diverse world through teacher education programs. These principles also included expanding leadership opportunities in the Montessori organizations and implementing professional development programs for school leaders to understand and practice inclusion and foster a more respectful workplace. Ungerer urged Montessori Heads of Schools to make more efforts to attract and retain a diverse pool of talent to reflect the diversity of the school population and the communities they serve. Although Ungerer believed that living up to these values could be a challenge, they also present new opportunities and ultimately benefit the children,

families, communities, and world.

Even though Montessori approached the curriculum from a global framework and a cosmic universalist perspective, the subject matter and the lessons, which were created through Montessori's lectures, particularly in the academic subjects, such as mathematics, language, geography, and history, were primarily derived from a Eurocentric perspective. Timelines of history used in the Montessori teacher albums and the description of the ancient civilizations still claim that western civilization is the cradle of how humans as known developed. It was not until Montessori spent years in India that a shift in Montessori's thinking was somehow broadened.

In the book, *How to Educate the Human Potential,* Montessori (1991) indicated that as of late, civilization had been primarily associated with western cultures. However, Montessori argued,

> Indian sages have consistently claimed antiquity for their records, and works of profound philosophy, which used to outrage the credulity of western scholars, but which now has found sufficient corroboration to command respect if not yet entire acceptance. One fact clearly established is that Asiatic civilizations of advanced type far antedate European, and even Egyptian, and that both derived from a yet earlier land, a lost continent. (p. 79)

Montessori continued to speculate that the lost continent had remnants in what is known as the island of Poseidonis from this unknown Atlantean Continent. There is no mention of Africa, other than Egypt, being the civilization from which all of Europe derived their later civilizations.

In researching studies on Montessori and ABAR and CRP, the only other author

encountered was Montessori-teacher-turned author, Goertz (2001) who wrote *Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful–Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom*. In the book, Goertz recounted several examples of how to reach children who are marginalized within the classroom community, but not once did Goertz ever refer to any cultural isolation or issues pertaining to racism. Once again, Montessori never discussed explicitly issues of racism or cultural relevancy, even though Montessori's approach to education was both scientific and anthropological.

Implications

In conclusion, the color-blind mentality that clings within the Montessori contemporary community may prove to be detrimental to students of color and an impediment to the dismantling or ameliorating of racist structures and practices (Banks & Maixner, 2016). If Montessori education is to move towards greater acceptance within the realms of public education as a viable, effective, research-based curriculum, and an alternative educational pedagogy for students of color, there has to be close examination of its contents and the domains that must be expanded to include teacher training both in CRP and ABAR and how it is implemented in schools. The implication is that CRP and ABAR must be implemented beginning in preschool and be continued and sustained throughout the child's educational career. According to the researchers, this may or may not create a trajectory of equitable education for all students. However, an examination of culturally relevant pedagogy and ABAR curriculum in three Montessori schools may provide some insight into the possible connections between CRP and ABAR and the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators and the outcomes for students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the framework and procedures for this qualitative case study of three public Montessori schools implementing CRP-ABAR are outlined. The context of the settings, a description of the student populations, the research design, and data collection are delineated to provide the structure of the study. After an examination of the data, educators are faced with a consistent and troubling trend: African American and Latinx students are lagging behind their White peers in reading, as measured on the 2015 Nation's Report Card. The average fourth- and eighth-grade reading scale scores from the Nation's Report Card (2015) data included a demonstration of this phenomenon. In Figure 1, the fourth- and eighth-grade student summary for 2011 and 2013 is displayed.

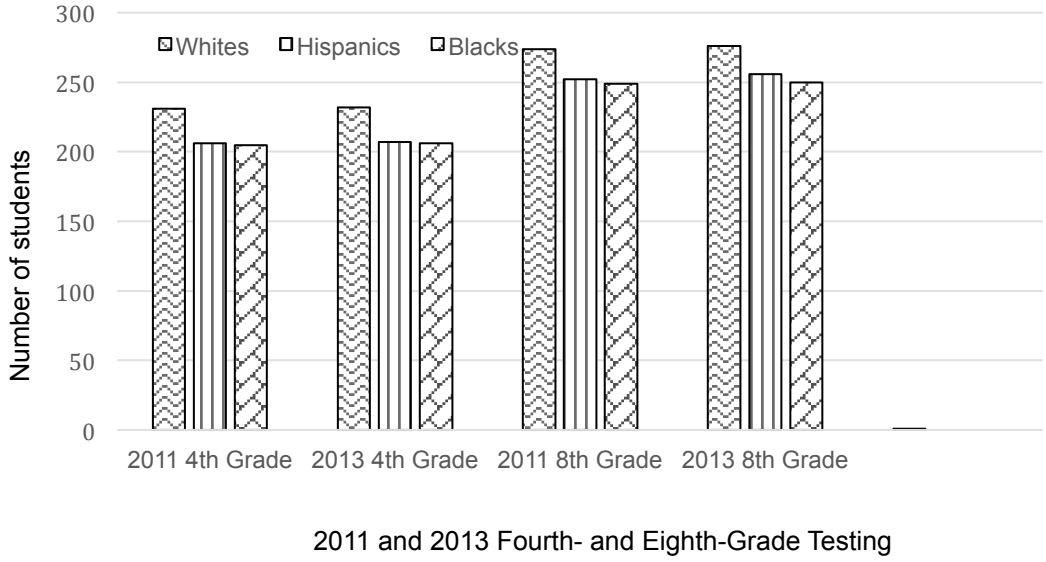

Figure 1. Educational progress 2015 (Nation's Report Card, 2015). No permission required.

Initially, researchers suggested that culturally responsive pedagogy and ABAR could be effective ways of increasing the achievement of students of color. In addition, researchers suggested that the framework of Montessori could be a particularly powerful

pedagogy for students of color. Faced with the troubling data, as it relates to students of color, the researchers elected to conduct case studies to examine three urban public Montessori schools with a majority (51% or more) population of students of color that professed to exhibit both high-quality Montessori implementation and a commitment to CRP and ABAR. Through this qualitative study, the researchers hoped to gain insight and to determine if there was a connection between CRP-ABAR and student outcomes. The questions under consideration follow:

1. How does CRP-ABAR curriculum operate in three urban public Montessori schools? What are some best practices?

2. How does the implementation of CRP-ABAR curricula in Montessori schools affect parents' perceptions?

3. In urban Montessori schools, utilizing CRP-ABAR curricula, what are the connections between teachers' perceptions and outcomes for their students of color?

4. How does implementing CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools impact behavioral referrals, suspension rates and academic outcomes, such as proficiency levels for high-stakes testing in reading and mathematics for students of color? What are some of the challenges?

Context-Setting of the Study

There were three schools in this study and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. New Heights Montessori Charter School is a kindergarten through Grade 8, public Montessori charter school with a privately owned preschool that funnels into the charter. The school is located on 8.5 acres in a low socio-economic neighborhood between a warehouse and a public housing apartment complex on the outskirts of a major

city in the southeastern United States. The campus has a preserved hammock, abundant live oaks, fichus, and gumbo-limbo trees. The natural green space outdoors allows each classroom to explore organic gardening and take responsibility for their plot of land. In addition, students enjoy the two playground areas, basketball court, fitness area, soccer-football field, and tricycle path. Numerous gazebos and picnic tables provide a shady place for lunch. The school has been open for more than two decades. At the publication of this study, the school acquired dual accreditation with, both AMS and Cognia, formally Advanced-ED, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement.

The majority of the students do not live in the immediate area. They are transported from outside the area by their parents. The enrollment is just over 600 with approximately 50% of the students qualifying for the free or price-reduced lunches.

There are 28 classroom teachers, three exceptional education teachers, an art teacher, a music teacher, and a physical education teacher. Instructional support staff consists of 32 classroom assistants and six additional staff members who work in the before- and after-school care program and are often used as substitutes in the classrooms. Support staff who are contracted consist of a guidance counselor, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, an instructional technology specialist, and a leadership in energy and environmental design consultant. The district's Charter School Office provides, as needed, a psychologist, a staffing specialist, and a social worker. The administrative team consists of two codirectors who are Montessori trained teachers and the cofounders of the school. There is a lead teacher who also serves as the exceptional educational coordinator and has now been named assistant codirector. In addition,

another teacher has also been promoted to the position of assistant codirector. All four are women of color. Other noninstructional positions include an administrative assistant, a bookkeeper, a preschool administrative assistant, a part-time office clerk, a food coordinator, an after-school coordinator, and a maintenance coordinator. An ethnic breakdown of the instructional staff follows: 54.0% Hispanic, 17.5% White, 25.0% Black, and 3.5% Asian. These statics include only the head teachers and specialized teachers. These statistics do not include the support instructional staff.

In the tradition of Montessori, the school adheres to multiage classrooms. There are seven primary classes. These classes consist of 3- to 6-year-olds. In these prekindergarten to kindergarten classes, there are 27 students with a lead teacher, a prekindergarten teacher, and a teacher's aide. There are 10 lower elementary classes that consist of 6- to 9-year-olds, corresponding to first through third grades. In each of the 10 classrooms, there are 22 students with a teacher and an assistant.

There are five upper elementary classrooms. There are approximately 27 students in each of these fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classrooms with a lead teacher and a teacher assistant. These students are referred to as 9- to 12-year-olds. The middle school's multiage three grade levels is compromised by the Charter, which goes only to the eighth grade; therefore, the middle school includes only two grade levels–seventh and eighth. These levels are usually referred to as the 12- to 15-year-olds. There are 62 students with three lead teachers and a teacher assistant. All (100%) classroom teachers are both state certified and Montessori certified or in a Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education training program. Two of the three Exceptional Student Education teachers and all four administrators are Montessori certified.

Cedar Hills Montessori Charter School is a kindergarten through eighth-grade center. The school is located in a residential area surrounded by homes in a hilly section in a state in the western part of the United States. The school is in its eighth year. The school consists of two campuses within a 5-minute drive of each other. One campus is situated in a former district school. It sits on what appears to be about the size of half of a city block.

There is one large building with lots of windows, three trailers with murals of animals and city scenes, a smaller building with a stage that is used as a cafeteria. These buildings surround an asphalt outdoor play area on three sides. The area contains two basketball courts, a play area with some slides, and monkey bars resting on an outdoor mat. There are outlines of hopscotch and tic-tac-toe upon the concrete. There are wooden enclosed garden boxes, painted bright colors, scattered around the area. The play area is enclosed by a low stone wall and a tall wire fence. On this campus, there are 300 students with three kindergarten classrooms and a few 4-year-olds. There are seven six-to-nine classes and several administrative offices.

The second campus houses 150 fourth through eighth graders in one four-story brick building. The building once was occupied by a private school. There are four classes of 9- to 12-year-olds, and one middle school of seventh and eighth graders housed in two classrooms. Like the other campus, the play area is asphalt with a basketball court, slides, and swings. Both buildings exude a sense of history and character with solid wooden doors and windows encased in wood. Both schools are nestled within middle class residential neighborhoods.

There are 15 classroom teachers, one exceptional education teacher, a physical education teacher, two music teachers, and a reading teacher. Instructional support staff includes a technology specialist, a speech-and-language pathologist, an occupational therapist, and a school psychologist. There are 15 classroom assistants, five student support assistants, and two substitutes teachers. Additional staff includes one Head of School, a Director of Instructional and Curriculum, a Director of Operations, an Operations Manager, and an Assistant Operations Manager. There is a Site Coordinator for each campus. The after-school program has two Directors of After School and two After-Care Counselors, divided between the two campuses. The racial ethnic makeup of the administrative staff is 75% White and 25% Black. The ethnic breakdown for the lead teachers is approximately 48% White, 26% Black, and 26% Latinx. These statics include only the head teachers and specialized teachers. All lead teachers are Montessori certified; however, they are not all state certified. In those instances where they were not state certified, the support teacher had the state certification. One of the four administrators was Montessori certified.

At Rapid River Montessori Charter School, there are students from kindergarten through eighth grade. There is a separate preschool in the same building that serves 3- and 4-year-olds. Enrollment in the preschool does not guarantee a placement in the charter. The students must apply for the charter in kindergarten. Located in an urban setting in the Midwestern United States, the school consists of one two-story building that was originally used as a factory. The building itself is filled with character and charm from the concrete floors to the exposed interior brick walls and doors with top-to-bottom glass panels leading to classrooms, offices, entrances, and exits. There is an open space

with different little nooks that allow for small group lessons and a larger space that is used for sitting and relaxing. There is also an indoor gymnasium where they hold school-wide assemblies.

At the outside entrance at the rear and along the side of the building, there is a small patch of grass and a larger area of asphalt that is designed for parking. In this area, the children have outdoor play and gardening. There is a gazebo and potted plants along the wall. The school, originally a private preschool, was granted a charter a little over a decade ago.

The enrollment includes approximately 270 students. There are two preschool classes with 3- and 4-year-olds. There is one classroom of kindergarten. There are three six-to-nine classrooms and three nine-to-12 classrooms. The middle school includes two seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms.

There are 11 classroom teachers, one music teacher, one physical education teacher, two Exceptional Education teachers, two reading specialists, 11 teacher assistants, one speech therapist, a building support guide, and one garden-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) teacher. The racial ethnic breakdown of the administrative staff is 50% Black, 25% White and 25% Latinx. The racial ethnic breakdown of the lead teacher and instructional staff consists of 67% White, 28% Black, and 5% Asian. These statics include only the head teachers and specialized teachers. They do not include the support staff. Of the 11 classroom teachers, all are state certified and seven are Montessori certified. Of the four administrators, which includes the lead teacher, two are Montessori trained, and one of the Black administrators has a position specifically designed to support and sustain the ABAR focus.

Description of the Student Population

At New Heights Montessori School, Cedar Hill Montessori School, and Rapid River Montessori School, the populations of students of color are 82%, 67%, and 51% respectively. According to the 2016-2017 accountability report of New Heights Montessori School, the ethnic makeup is approximately 58% Hispanic, 20% African American, 18% White, and 4% Asian. Approximately 50% of the students are on the free and price-reduced lunch program.

At Cedar Hill Montessori Charter, the ethnic makeup of the students is approximately 33% White, 25% Latinx, 21% African American, 10%Asian, 1% Native American, and 9% identify as being of two or more races. Approximately 33% of the students qualify for free and price-reduced lunch program.

At Rapid River Montessori, the student population consists of approximately 49% White, 42% Black, and 9% Latinx and Asian. Approximately 42% of the students qualify for free and price-reduced lunch program.

Research Design

The researchers conducted a qualitative case study of three urban public Montessori schools with a population of 51% or more of students of color and a commitment of 2 years or more of CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting. The rationale for this design was to gain greater insight into the way in which CRP-ABAR is implemented in Montessori schools, and any possible connections of CRP-ABAR and the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators, and outcomes for students of color. The researchers hoped to add to the limited literature on CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting, particularly public Montessori schools.

Procedures

A flyer (see Appendix A) and the attached Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix B) soliciting possible participants in the study was posted on social media and web sites for Montessori national organizations (i.e., MSJ, Montessori Research Interest Group). Because there are a limited number of public Montessori schools doing CRP-ABAR work that meet the criteria for inclusion in this study, the researchers conducted a targeted recruitment based on a small sample. Additionally, during the June 26, 2018, MSJ conference, a flyer was handed out to prospective schools. Once confirmations of participation were established by the schools' designees, letters were sent (see Appendix C), specifying details and requesting the participating schools to provide visitation dates.

The first three schools that met the criteria were contacted and a conference call was arranged to finalize the details for the visitation. The criteria for the schools under study included 51% or more of the population were students of color, a commitment to at least 2 years to infusing CRP-ABAR within the curriculum, and a high fidelity of Montessori implementation, with at least 80% of teachers with Montessori Accreditation Teacher Education Training Credential or in the process of getting training.

Data Collection

A 10-step process was involved in the data collection process. First, researchers planned a 1-week visit to each of the three campuses. The second step follows: Researchers reviewed and collected the informed consents (see Appendix D) while visiting the schools. Third, 2 days were spent observing classrooms, office areas, parent

and teacher-staff activities, and drop-off and pickup to familiarize themselves with the schools' cultures. The researchers used field notes to compile their observations.

Fourth, 3 days were spent conducting interviews (see Appendix E) with three focus groups. There were two randomly selected groups of parents and teachers. The third focus group consisted of administrators-school leaders. This random process was done to group parents and teachers separately by race and ethnicity. As an example, at New Heights Montessori, for the parent group, every third name was pulled out of each of the groups until there were four Blacks, four Latinx, three Whites, and two Asians. This process was repeated for the teacher focus group where three Blacks, three Latinx, and two Whites chosen. Administrators-school leaders were not randomly selected. The focus groups consisted of 13 parents, eight teachers, and three to four administrators-school leaders at each site. A digital voice recorder was used that also provided a vocal recording and a scripted recording of the interviews (see Appendix E) for the semistructured questions for each group. There were three recording devices–one for each researcher and an extra one.

Fifth, a participant observer approach (Yin, 2016) was used, because the researchers have background knowledge and training in the subject under study and their school site was one of the schools under study. Sixth, the researchers collected and analyzed additional data from the past 3 years, such as school disciplinary infractions and suspensions, and test scores. Researchers examined if there was a change in behavioral and academic outcomes after implementing CRP-ABAR in an urban Montessori school.

Seventh, the researchers took observation notes and identified one classroom per school that demonstrated high fidelity of Montessori and used Aguilar-Valdez's (2015)

culturally responsive rubric to measure CRP. No such tool, at the time of this study, was found to measure ABAR.

Eighth, confidentiality of the schools and participants was maintained by keeping informed consents with the participant names in a secure, locked file cabinet, and will be destroyed 2 years following the completion of the study. Artifacts and transcriptions were kept in a separate locked file and will be destroyed after 2 years.

Ninth, audio recordings were protected with a locked password for the computers and will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. Finally, transcriptions were kept in a separate locked file cabinet and will be destroyed after 2 years.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers followed the protocols as outlined in the web-based training course, *Protecting Human Research Participants*, by the National Institutes of Health Office of Extra-Mural Research. The focus groups were strictly voluntary, and no penalty was imposed for nonparticipation. The confidentiality was closely guarded. Confidentiality was established by using pseudonyms for participants and schools. An outside consultant interviewed the parents, teachers, and administrators that the researchers cofounded. The consultant signed a nondisclosure agreement to maintain confidentiality of the participants and the schools.

Benefits and Risks

Risks were minimal, however, if a participant felt uncomfortable or stressed, the researchers would have stopped the audiotape interview and immediately destroyed the tape. There were no benefits to participating in the focus groups other than participants having the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts in a confidential setting.

Quality of Data

The researchers aimed for consistency to establish trustworthiness for this qualitative study (Yin, 2016). The researchers worked separately, so as not to influence each other, to code and identify emerging themes. They then came together to compare and agree on the results. Researchers conducted a triangulation of the data. A participant observer approach was used, because the researchers have background knowledge and training of the subject under study and their school site was one of the schools under study. Open-ended questions were used with limited input from researchers when conducting interview (Yin, 2016).

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed by three outside parties. The written transcripts were compared to the recorded interviews to check for accuracy. Once the audiotapes were transcribed, codes evolved and themes emerged from the coding (Yin, 2016). The field notes were used to analyze and identify emerging themes in addition to using Aguilar-Valdez's culturally responsive rubric on the three classrooms. School observations; archival documents; and parent, staff, and administrator interviews were used to triangulate the data (Yin, 2016). Although the findings could not be generalized to the broader Montessori community, the researchers used the schools' archival data to see if there were any connections with the perceptions of the participants and the schools' accountability on student outcomes (i.e., behavioral infractions, suspensions, high-stakes testing; Debs, 2016c).

Limitations

Measuring fidelity of teacher implementation of CRP-ABAR curricula was challenging. Yull, Blitz, Thompson, and Murray (2014) reported that many teachers view their students of color through a cultural deficit lens and, therefore, may not have high expectations for their students. Race and racialized thinking influence the work when conducting research on student capabilities based on race (Ladson-Billings, 2012). There is still racial and cultural bias in standardized tests. According to Ansari and Winsler (2014), Banks and Maixner (2016), Brown (2016), Debs (2016a, 2016b, 2016c), Hall and Murray (2011), and Stansbury (2014), the Montessori method must become more culturally responsive to the growing needs of a diverse Montessori public school population. However, the Eurocentric curriculum remains. How will this affect the implementation of CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools? A limitation is that there are very few schools that are committed to both Montessori methodology and CRP-ABAR curricula practices. Establishing a clear standardization of what constitutes CRP-ABAR practices within a public Montessori context was also not clear from the beginning of the study. Due to the fact that the majority of the students and parents at the sites of the study are students of color, parents and students may feel alienated and marginalized based on what Debs (2016a) referred to as "conflicted fit–feeling aligned with a school on some interpretive dimensions and at odds on others" (p. 6).

The research was conducted at three sites with 51% or greater students of color. One of the schools selected was the school the researchers cofounded and codirected at the time of this study; therefore, staff may have felt obligated to buy-in to the CRP and ABAR curriculum in order to appease their supervisors. However, an outside consultant

was used to conduct all the interviews for the staff focus group and most of the interviews of the other two focus groups. The length of the study was relatively short. Both researchers identify as women of color and this may have impacted the findings.

Delimitations

The researchers did not focus on the efficacy of the Montessori curriculum, but rather its possible connection to CRP and ABAR. Although the study included an examination of the teachers' evolutionary process in becoming culturally competent educators, this was not the target of the research and was observed because it ensures fidelity to the implementation of the CRP and ABAR curricula.

Summary

Although Montessori is seen as a viable educational option for students of color (Debs, 2016c), Montessori schools are not free from racial bias as indicated in Brown and Steele's (2015) comparative study on racial discipline disproportionality in Montessori and traditional schools. Faced with the troubling data, as it relates to students of color, the researchers elected to conduct case studies to examine three urban public Montessori schools, with a majority (51% or more) population of students of color, that professed to implement CRP-ABAR to determine if there were a connection between CRP-ABAR and student outcomes.

The study involved interviewing three focus groups of stakeholders–parents, teachers, and school leaders. The parent focus groups included Blacks, Asians, Latinx, and Whites. These groups were formed with input from the administrators of the schools under study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of the parents, teachers, and administrators as to how CRP-ABAR worked in three public Montessori schools. This was facilitated through semistructured individual interviews with different stakeholders–parents, teachers, and administrators. In this chapter, there is a description of the data that were collected and analyzed to investigate the research questions. The results of the observations by the researchers, focus group questions, and archival data (high-stakes testing results and behavioral referrals) are provided. The qualitative semistructured questions were stated, the answers recorded, followed by the coding, and the themes were derived from the homogeneous focus group interviews and responses.

Three major themes emerged about the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the impact of CRP-ABAR in a Montessori setting. There was the perception that CRP-ABAR could be delivered through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach. They were consistent in the perception that CRP-ABAR connects to Montessori through peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment. Teachers' perceptions were that CRP-ABAR practices impact students of color primarily through social emotional growth with limited academic outcomes, although the schools had only been implementing CRP-ABAR for up to 3 years. Teachers believed that CRP-ABAR could impact students of color positively by building community, interrupting biases, and increasing cultural awareness. Even with an intentional focus and diversity training, many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking. There were perceived acts of unconscious biases

as in microaggressions and macroaggressions. Parents across schools were mixed as to the impact of CRP-ABAR. Some parents believed racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity. Other parents identified some teachers-staff members with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity.

When soliciting potential schools for the study, the researchers felt it was important to identify criteria for the schools that would help ensure a commitment to both CRP-ABAR and Montessori. The caveat was that the researchers had to rely on the schools' accuracy of meeting the criteria, instead of having an outside agency or tool validate the schools' perceptions. Consequently, establishing a clear standardization of what constitutes Montessori schools centered on CRP-ABAR practices was lacking from the beginning of the study. The focus of the study was not measuring the fidelity of both CRP-ABAR and Montessori, but rather examining attitudes of teachers, administrators, and parents in relation to CRP-ABAR and Montessori. The researchers were also looking to see if CRP-ABAR had any positive relationships with outcomes for students of color. All three schools selected for the study had representatives attending the 2018 MSJ Conference. This venue was where the flyer soliciting schools for the study was disseminated. The commitment to attend the MSJ Conference further indicated the schools' openness and commitment to doing the work although it was later discovered that the implementation of CRP-ABAR varied widely among the schools.

Procedures

The researchers visited the three schools in the Fall of 2018. In being consistent with Yin's participant-observer definition, the researchers spent a minimum of 1 week observing the schools and individual classrooms at all three sites. They conducted all the

interviews at two of the schools. At each of these two sites, they randomly divided the list of who was to be interviewed between themselves. As discussed in Chapter III, the researchers acknowledged again that the site of the school that they founded had built-in assumptions and biases due to their relationship with the school. However, the researchers observed with the best intentions of trained field workers conducting site visits (Yin, 2016).

A consultant was hired to conduct the interviews at the school that the researchers were affiliated. This was done to avoid any discomfort from the participants due to their relationships with the researchers. The consultant conducted all the interviews at that location except for four parents–two Blacks, one Latinx, and one Asian and two administrators, one Black and one Latinx. Before the interviews were completed, the consultant had to return home and there were not enough funds in the budget to have that consultant return for the remaining interviews. As a result, the researchers were left to conduct six of the interviews at their school. There did not appear to be differences in the data between what parents shared with the consultant and what they shared with the researchers. At each location, there were 13 parents, eight teachers, and four administrators. At New Heights and Rapid River, one of the administrators was not an employee of the school, but a member of the school's board of directors. Also, at Rapid River, one of the founding parents was responsible for instituting the ABAR focus, which included training and resources to the school community. The member was a professor at a local university who specialized in CRP and ABAR work.

Upon completion of all the interviews, the researchers listened to the taped interviews to ensure that they were complete and audible. Three different transcribers

were hired to do the transcribing. Of the 75 interviews, one transcriber did eight, one did 27, and one did 40. Once the transcripts were printed, the researchers compared the transcribed text to the recorded interviews to ensure that the interviewees were properly identified to the correct school. They also checked to see that there were no major discrepancies in the context of what was said and what was printed. Once the transcriptions were completed, they were printed, and three folders were created for each school site. Each folder contained a written copy of a complete set of the interviews from the parents, teachers, and administrators. Each of the researchers was presented a set and one was used as a master set, which was kept in a locked file cabinet.

Individually each researcher was charged with open coding (Yin, 2016), by hand, the 75 interviews so as not to influence each other. After this tedious process was completed, the researchers came together to make discretionary choices about the segments of the text to categorize. Then they made meaning of the codes by summarizing each focus group question within the parent, teacher-staff, and administrator focus groups (Yin, 2016). The researchers organized the narratives of the interviewees in a cross-participant manner to pinpoint the attention of the study on the topics and issues examined in the four research questions (Yin, 2016). Although there was not a focus on individual responses *per se*, there was an emphasis on disclosing race within the three subgroups (i.e., parents, teachers, and administrators) when reporting responses in each school. The researchers selected four questions per focus group that would best answer the overarching research questions.

At the time of the study, the researchers were searching for a tool that would measure CRP and ABAR within a Montessori classroom. The closest thing that they

could find to measure the efficacy of CRP and ABAR was the *Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons-Assignments* developed by Aguilar-Valdez (see Appendix F). During their interviews, at each school, a teacher's name emerged as one who practiced CRP and ABAR in the classrooms. The researchers then went back, separately to those classrooms, and conducted observations from 45 to 60 minutes. They took observational notes. Later, they compared their field notes and had a discussion, arrived at consensus, and together graded the *Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons-Assignments* for each teacher.

The researchers included two examples from their field notes of teacher observations at each of the three schools. One was an example of a highly effective practitioner of CRP as indicated in Valdez's rubric, while the other had challenges in the delivery of CRP-ABAR practices. The researchers collected 3 years of archival data, reported by race and ethnicity that included standardized test results in language arts and math, and suspension rates-discipline referrals reports. All three major components (i.e., field notes-teacher observations, focus group interviews, and archival data) were used in the triangulation of the data.

Three major themes emerged about perceptions of the administrators, teachers, and parents about the impact of CRP-ABAR in a Montessori setting. There was the perception that CRP-ABAR could be delivered through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach. They were consistent in the perception that CRP-ABAR connects to Montessori through peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment. Teachers' perceptions were that CRP-ABAR practices impact students of color primarily through social emotional growth with limited academic outcomes, although the schools had only been implementing CRP-ABAR for up to 3 years.

Teachers believed that CRP-ABAR could impact students of color positively by building community, interrupting biases, and increasing cultural awareness. Even with an intentional focus and diversity training, many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking. There were perceived acts of unconscious biases as in microaggressions and macroaggressions. Parents across schools were mixed as to the impact of CRP-ABAR. Some parents believed racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity. Other parents identified some teachers-staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity.

Field Notes-Teacher Observations

Ladson Billings (2008) would argue that good teaching is the case for CRP. There is no magic formula, but rather teachers who have success know how to meet the needs of all students. This appeared to be the case with all three teachers who demonstrated what might be considered good practices. The observations demonstrated the uneven-wide range of ABAR implementation across the schools and within the schools. In both CRP-ABAR exemplary classrooms and other classrooms, instances of good CRP-ABAR practices were observed. In addition to general classroom visits throughout each school, the researchers visited one classroom at each school for an extended length of time (45 to 60 minutes per researcher) that each school chose as an example of a classroom committed to both CRP-ABAR and Montessori. After the examples of teachers who appeared competent in CRP-ABAR, the researchers also provided examples during their fieldwork of teachers who were struggling with demonstrating successful CRP-ABAR in their classrooms.

Observations of Effective Practices of CRP-ABAR

At Cedar Hill, while interviewing parents and teachers, one teacher's name was brought up several times as being a leader and someone committed to both CRP, ABAR, and Montessori. After each researcher observed the classroom separately, they came together to use Aguilar-Valdez's (2015) *Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons-Assignments* (see Appendix F) and their field notes to measure the teacher's cultural competency.

The room was aesthetically pleasing with an ample supply of both commercial- and teacher-made materials. Some of the materials that were out included the checkerboard, bead frame, decimal board, moveable alphabet, hundreds board, and a volcano lesson. In looking at the shelves, there were teacher-made materials of African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinx leaders. There were also lessons on phenology and melanin to explain the differences in skin color and physical features. There were time lines that included African and Asian civilizations. There was also a library of CRP-ABAR books with a wide range of reading levels. Within the peace area, there were artifacts and ritual-Infusing values of African, Native American, and Asian cultures.

There were approximately 26 students of diverse backgrounds consisting of Black, White, Asian, Latinx, and mixed-race children. The class appeared normalized meaning all children observed were engaged and working in small groups, in pairs, and individually. The students moved throughout the room with confidence and ease. There were two teachers in the classroom: one Black and one White. The Black teacher was the Montessori teacher and the White teacher had the state credentials. Although the Black teacher had not completed the Montessori training, it was observed by both researchers

that the teacher knew the Montessori lessons and how to use the materials. The Black teacher captivated the students when giving a lesson on nouns. A group of four students started and, by the end of the lesson, nine more students had wandered over to observe and participate in the noun lesson. The Black teacher read a book called *When the President is a Bully* and had an open discussion with the students about equity, decolonization, and social justice. It was evident by the quality of the discussion that the students were aware of these topics and able to apply them to their classroom environment. Both researchers agreed that the teacher was highly effective in all areas, according to Aguilar-Valdez's 2015 *Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons-Assignments* (see Appendix F).

At New Heights, the researchers visited a classroom for the purposes of demonstrating an example of a teacher who they felt was committed to the CRP-ABAR. Because the two previous schools visited had teachers of six-to-nine grades as examples, they decided to use a six-to-nine teacher as well. Interestingly, this division–the largest in the school–was the most resistant to the idea when introducing African American literature that focused on slavery and the Civil War. They felt the subject matter was developmentally inappropriate for that age group. It was left up to the grade group on deciding how to approach the controversial subject matter without trivializing the content while maintaining the integrity of the African American experience.

At the time of the study, at New Heights, a new wing was being constructed for the six-to-nine group. Unfortunately, for almost an academic year, there were two classrooms combined into one space. There were two head Montessori teachers (one Black and one first-year Latinx who had previously been an assistant) with two assistants

(one White and one Latinx) and 44 students sharing the classroom. The Black teacher was an experienced Montessori and State certified teacher. Incidentally, the students had high-performing test scores and their teacher had been recognized as a highly effective teacher by the State's Department of Education for several consecutive years. The shelves were quite crowded with both Montessori and teacher-made materials.

In anticipation of the completion of the 10 new state-of-the-art classrooms, there were boxes filled with materials waiting to be opened and placed on shelves in the new building. In the meanwhile, the library area was stacked with books about African Americans and other cultures. On the walls, there was a display of the children's artwork. There were colorful three-dimensional designs of plantations indicating the parts of the plantation, including crops, workhouses, slave quarters, and the big house. There were also multiple quilts designed by the students. Both art projects were the results of previously read books, such as *If You Lived When There Was Slavery in America, Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, *The Patchwork Path*, and *The Quilt to Freedom*.

During the afternoon work period, the Black teacher led the students in the song, "Follow the Drinking Gourd." That instructor then proceeded to connect the longitude and latitude Montessori lesson previously used to the lesson the students were about to do. Each group had a map of the route to freedom from south of Ohio up through Canada. The students were given the task of plotting the points given on the maps. Students were encouraged to work together in groups. The other teacher and assistants walked around to each group to make themselves available if assistance was needed. The questions and discussion throughout the activity reflected a participation of all students of all races and in all three grades for that division. The teacher announced that the follow-up activity for

later that week would be to create their constellation much like the Drinking Gourd that would serve as a symbol to a destination. Despite the crowded room and high level of activity, the students were working cooperatively with enthusiasm and a sense of purpose.

Although the lessons observed were not exclusively Montessori, the teacher tied in the Montessori lessons previously taught and adapted them to the activities generated by the literary study. The researchers agreed that the teacher was highly effective in all areas according to Aguilar-Valdez's 2015 *Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons-Assignments* (see Appendix F).

At Rapid River, the school that was focused on ABAR as an organization and in the broader community, the researchers were limited in their ability to observe ABAR in action and found limited instances of ABAR in classroom practice. The school staff arranged visits to classrooms so there was not free reign to spontaneously walk into any classroom. Part of the reason was the leadership team wanted the researchers to see Montessori trained teachers.

Unlike at Cedar Hill, where the researchers were given free rein to visit the classrooms at will, at Rapid River, they were given a schedule to follow without deviation. The only six-to-nine class on their schedule was that of a White teacher who had been at the school for many years. The teacher was considered one of the strongest Montessori teachers in that school. The classroom was a large room with lots of windows with one half of one wall with exposed brick painted white. The room had mostly abstract art on the walls as prints and a quadrant of pictures of people of color and two large maps. There were two large sink areas–one was close to the art area and the other was

near the food preparation where children were able to prepare and eat snacks at will. The room had the appearance of a loft with its high ceilings and exposed air conditioning pipes.

There was a 3-hour uninterrupted work period in the mornings. There were between 29 and 32 students in the class of which about one third were Black. Students had an array of materials on the floor, mostly math. There were bead chains, golden materials, an additional strip board, memorization board, and fractions and geometry lessons. The teacher was working with a small group of students on a math lesson, while the assistant who was Black male floated, stopping to help a Black boy who was reading and answering comprehension questions. There was a White boy and Black boy working together on a three-part card-matching lesson on animals. Some students were working with the fraction metal insets and cutting up construction paper. In reviewing some of the students' composition books, it was revealed that a great deal of work had also been done with grammar and word study skills. "Friend" is the way students were addressed to avoid standard gender identities. The room was unusually quiet. Occasionally the head teacher would say, "Shhh."

The students all had their individual work plans. In addition, on the board, the teacher had specific guidelines and expectations per grade level for lessons that needed to be worked on or practiced that day. The list included for the afternoon, a presentation on writing about Latinx heritage, 30 minutes of outdoor play for one half of the class, while the others stayed inside and did silent reading and then they would flip flop.

Both researchers agreed that the teacher was highly effective in most areas, according to Aguilar-Valdez's 2015 *Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons-*

Assignment (see Appendix F). Although there were several areas that were not observable, such as connection, social justice and equity-decolonization, there were no apparent discrepancies in how that teacher treated the Black students and the White students. The atmosphere in the classroom reflected one of peace, equity, and mutual respect between the teacher, the Black assistant, and the students. The teacher appeared to attend to the emotional and academic needs of all the students.

Challenges to Implementing CRP-ABAR in the Classroom

The researchers gathered information from observations during their weeklong visits. In some instances, the researchers were able to observe that there were teachers who were grappling with the materialization of CRP-ABAR.

At Cedar Hill, it was a common occurrence to see Black children being disciplined in the hallways. More specific examples of explicit and implicit bias were observed with a White teacher in a Pre-K classroom where individual disciplinary approaches varied according to the race of some students. As an example, there were noted differences in two incidences involving students who were having behavioral challenges in the same class. The White teacher was struggling with classroom management and, overall, the children in the class were not concentrating nor engaged in meaningful work. One White boy who appeared to have behavioral challenges was loud, running around the class, and nonresponsive to the adult's multiple redirections. The teacher unsuccessfully tried to redirect him repeatedly by attempting to engage him in a Montessori lesson, spoke to him at a close distance, provided him choice, and attempted to entice him with a reward. The child ignored the teacher and threw himself on the floor and was completely inconsolable. Suddenly, a young Black man walked into the room

and said something to the child. The child stopped crying, got up off the floor, and followed the young man out of the class. The researchers later found out the young man had been hired specifically to help teachers with children with behavioral problems.

While the White student received targeted support, two Black boys who also appeared to have behavioral issues received a different treatment. They were both isolated from the other students. Both were sitting at traditional desks. One was facing a blackboard and the other was facing a wall. They were left to their own devices. One was coloring and the other was cutting little stripes of paper and gluing them to another piece of paper. They were being loud and disruptive, and the teacher never once tried to redirect, nor engage them in an academic lesson. The teacher appeared to ignore them.

The teacher seemed overwhelmed with classroom management and later disclosed that one of the Black boys had been retained and could not even write his name. The teacher also admitted personally struggling with how to teach him. The teacher did, however, share one example of success where they cocreated a book on lizards to help the child learn his numbers from one to five. Later, the teacher also disclosed that she had removed both children from the desks because one of the White administrators had pointed out that it appeared that she was ostracizing the two boys. The teacher said that was not her intention, but rather thought she was giving them their own space. That same retained child was later observed in a six-to-nine class where he was engaged in a Montessori lesson where he appeared calm, peaceful, and happy. When asked by the researcher, while observing this Black teacher's class, why was he there, the Black teacher said it was a reward for good behavior in his class. When he was good in his class, he was permitted to go to her class.

At New Heights, Mr. Sims, one of the Black parents, called the office. He was concerned about his son, Johnny, who was in Mrs. Lee's class. Mrs. Lee was complaining that Johnny was not listening, and she was having difficulty with him staying on task and completing assignments. She also said Johnny was disrupting the other children. Mr. Sims, a counselor in a nearby district school, was the one to drop his son off and pick him up every day. He wanted to know what was going on in the classroom. It was known that Mrs. Lee was having some difficulty with classroom management. She had been a coteacher with a veteran teacher the past couple of years. She had taught math and the test scores had been good. This was her first year with her own class. To answer Mr. Sims's question, the administrators decided to do some observations.

Mrs. Lee's classroom was bright and cheerful with lots of windows to let in the light. There were about 22 students in the room, of which about six were Black. The children had just completed their circle time. They got up to get lessons to begin the day's work. Some wandered over to the shelves to choose their work. One little blond boy continued to lie on the floor half under the table while he pulled on the legs of the chair above his head. Two boys (both White presenting Latinx) chased each other around the class as another tried to get their attention: It was unclear if he was trying to stop them or trying to join in the game. Two little Latinx girls (one White presenting, the other darker) were having a heated discussion about something. Other children were talking amiably among themselves. Johnny, who was standing by another child, walked across the room to speak to another little Black boy who was standing by his table. As they began what appeared to be a cordial conversation, the teacher rushed over and began to

reprimand the two boys. Both children looked up at her with bewildered looks on their faces as if they were trying to figure out what they were doing wrong. They tried to tell her they had not done anything. She did not want to hear it and insisted that they go back to their places and get to work. Both boys looked angry as they stalked off to follow her instructions. She then tried to engage the class to get to their lessons and begin to work. Some complied while others did not, but she did not approach any of the other children in the manner she addressed the two Black boys.

At Rapid River, it was observed that even with intentional ABAR lessons conducted, there still appeared to exist cases of bias against Black students. One of the classrooms on the schedule to visit was that of a lead teacher-upper elementary who was substituting for a nine-to-12 teacher who was not there that day. This lead teacher was an experienced Montessori teacher. In observing a group lesson on what appeared to be about identity, the teacher used a projector and had the children sitting in a circle. She attempted to tie in the Montessori lesson, Fundamental Needs of Man, with the lesson on identity. When the teacher asked about identity, someone said gender and they had a discussion on nonbinary identities. The students included their assistant who was referred to as “They.” The children were most understanding and aware as to why their assistant wanted to be referred to as “They.”

During that discussion, the teacher had pointed out to a Black boy who had entered the classroom with a laptop that he needed to control his body. It was observed that the child was having difficulty sitting still. The children initially were extremely interested in the lesson, but, as time went on, it appeared that their enthusiasm waned. The teacher did a lot of talking through explanations of previous concepts discussed and

prompted the students with questions. The teacher then progressed on to the Fundamental Needs of Man. The teacher asked the question, “Who can give me an example of a fundamental need? A Black boy said, “Water.” Another Black child called out, “Food.” The teacher did not comment. There were other students who raised their hands, but she picked on a White girl who said, “Life and death.” The teacher responded, “That’s profound. Let’s elaborate on that.” The child with the laptop walked over to the corner and drank from a thermos. The assistant walked over to him and he quickly returned to the circle and laid down on the floor.

It was observed that when many of the Black boys would answer a question, the teacher would either not comment or correct their answers by adding on or changing what was said, but highlighted and emphasized the responses of the White students. When the discussion became difficult to follow and more of the students became less interested, the Black boy with the laptop blurted out, “I’m bored.” The teacher responded by asking him to remove himself from the classroom. Although the lead teacher appeared knowledgeable when it came to CRP-ABAR, as was evidenced by the nomenclature she was presenting, while she facilitated this lesson, she appeared to favor White student responses. The teacher put an emphasis on long verbal exchanges with the children, which led them to tune out and lose interest after a while. This could have been the result of her substituting that day.

Because these are single observations, the researchers cannot know how reflective they are of the teachers’ overall practices. All the teachers showcased were Montessori trained and professed a commitment to CRP-ABAR.

Administrators, teachers, and parents were the stakeholders. The researchers began the audiotaped, semistructured interviews with three focus groups consisting of administrators and school leaders, teachers, and parents. A summary of the demographics of the focus groups is found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Focus Groups

School	White	Black	Latinx	Asian	Parent	Teacher	Admin
Cedar Hill	3	4	4	2	13		
	3	3	2			8	
	2	1		1			4
New Heights	3	4	4	2	13		
	2	3	3			8	
		2	2				4
Rapid River	4	5	1	3	13		
	4	3	1			8	
	2	2					4

Administrators-School Leaders Focus Group Responses

To achieve success in any school-wide effort, it is important to have the support of the administrators and school leaders. At all three schools, the administrators appeared committed to doing the CRP-ABAR work and were supportive of making it a school-wide focus. The reality is it is difficult for teachers to do the work individually without support or resources. However, once the school staff claims the work by making it a school-wide focus, members of the institution have the power to continue and expand this endeavor within the school and around the community.

To gauge the level of support for the implementation of CRP-ABAR within their schools, the researchers engaged in the interviews with all the administrators utilizing the audio-taped, semistructured questions, originally consisting of eight questions with nine subquestions (see Appendix E). During the analysis of the responses, the researchers pinpointed four focus group questions, predicated on supporting the examination of the four overall arching questions. The responses are reported in both narrative and chart formats.

Administrators-School Leaders Focus Question 1

The first focus question of the administrators-school leaders follows: How did your school get involved in CRP-ABAR and why did it become a school wide focus? The codes included school's mission, access, and closing the gap.

It was a part of the vision-mission statement was the primary reason given for becoming involved in CRP-ABAR at all three schools. It became a school-wide focus to diversify and meet the needs of all the children.

At Cedar Hill, one of the White administrators stated,

> It's written into our mission. We have a mission around diversity and serving all children of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We soon realized just putting them together did not constitute equity and that we needed to find some tools and systems for success. . . . Montessori also indirectly has an ABAR approach.

The Black administrator at Cedar Hill related,

> Our school was founded on the premise of providing access to the method to all kids to try to break the mold of Montessori being accessible only for those children who could write a check. . . . Here, you need to acknowledge that racism exists on this campus.

> That can be quite challenging, especially for those families who say, we don't see color. Well, we see color. Our test scores show that there is color. So, let's not kid ourselves about it.

The administrators at Cedar Hill were looking for a way to interrupt the cycle of inequities in addressing the needs of all students.

At New Heights, during the accreditation process, the self-study became an opportunity for the school to collectively reaffirm their commitment to this work. A Latinx administrator stated, "We're going through accreditation and we are expanding our mission to include CRP-ABAR, so that is one way we are trying to move to the next level." The administrators at New Heights were concerned with solidifying the concept of CRP-ABAR within their school; therefore, all stakeholders were invited to revisit the mission statement to include elements of CRP-ABAR.

At Rapid River, a Black administrator recalled,

> Rapid River had the mission to act as an intentionally integrated diverse school, committed to social justice before I even became interested in it at all–before I even knew what it was. But, by the time I started, the board had passed an institutional mandate that they were going for racial equity specifically. So, naming that there was a need for direct attention on systemic racism in our city and in our sector, broadly.

Another Black administrator shared how the school evolved in their CRP-ABAR focus when speaking about the Color Brave story,

> Actually, Color Brave was a response to a shooting in our community. When the verdict came out [in the middle of the day], we just said, we're opening Rapid River [as a space to the community]. So that evening, we just came. People came: They cried and they

> were in shock. People said, I can't believe this is happening: What are we going to do? I don't feel safe. It started there and people were asking can you keep doing this? We need a place. And we organized around Color Brave and yet we still keep doing it.

The administrators at each school indicated that CRP-ABAR was included in their schools' mission statements.

Administrators-School Leaders Focus Question 2

The Administrators-School Leaders Focus Question 2 follows: In what ways has the school's administration supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR and how can you move your school to the next level? The code words that surfaced at all three schools when asking the administrators how they supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR were teacher training, open conversations, and policies. At all three schools, the administrators and school leaders cited examples of how they supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR at their institutions.

At Cedar Hill, the administrators spoke in detail about how they each supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR. A Black administrator expounded,

> As students are challenged, teachers need to take a step back and say, what is the disconnect between this child and the steps to mastery in this particular area? It could be a code-switch, (child) needs to hear it in a certain tone because that's what triggers their brain, their heart, their light . . . At different times, teachers have to be aware, conscious, and sensitive to how they are interacting with all of their students and at the same time depersonalize it. In order to say this is how we create it systemically, . . . we are creating practices that support the work and policies to be able to identify when things are not happening.

The administrators at Cedar Hill tried to support the implementation of CRP-ABAR at their school by creating polices to support the work.

At New Heights, the administrators tried to create an inclusive atmosphere for all stakeholders. A Latinx administrator professed,

> I always try to make sure that we have a vice president on the PTA (Parent Teacher Association), a room parent, and on our Board of Directors–people who identify from the African American diaspora. . . . We talk about how important it is for the teachers to go out of their way to build rapport with their African American parents to really pull them in and connect. I think a way to support is by giving teachers an ability to empower them to choose the curriculum and choose how they are going to go about doing it, and, of course, providing professional development.

The administrators at New Height try to support the implementation of CRP-ABAR at their school by being inclusive of parents in all aspects of the school's operations and by giving teachers a voice is how curriculum decisions are made.

At Rapid River, the administrators had a great deal to say when asked how they supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR at their school. One of the White administrators declared support of implementing ABAR to teachers, students, and parents and said,

> I will also say it has been a profound learning experience with an explicit antiracist commitment. But before we came to the point of taking a stand as an institution, it seems like you can have conversations, but it ends up being individuals debating one another. However, once an institution takes a stand, it changes the dynamic. It is surprising how much power we have as an institution and as leaders. Sometimes, we try to deny our power, are ashamed of it, especially as White people, we want to not admit

> that we have power. Actually, amazing things can happen if we own and embrace our power.

At all three schools, it appeared that it is important to do ABAR school wide. It is hard to do the work individually as teachers. Once the school claims the work, it has power within the school and around the community.

How can you move your school to the next level? When the administrators at all three schools were asked how they could move their schools to the next level, the codes that appeared were system awareness-polices, teacher support, funding, future leadership, Montessori ABAR training.

At Cedar Hill, an Asian administrator stated,

> I think, as an administrator, my role would be how can I support that process of having the bandwidth, the time to really think deeply about what's the point of the curriculum (Montessori) and how do I adjust that to meet the needs of my students and being able to support that process?

A Black administrator stated, "Another part is figuring out the systems and structures around it, empower people to see it, and name it."

A White administrator reiterated,

> I think a lot of it is just setting up systems for facilitating those conversations and allowing . . . creating safe space for people to genuinely reflect and think about what students need and what we are doing to support whatever those needs are.

Another White administrator added, ". . . Support teachers in professional development investing in materials to backup and support CRP. . . . Insuring we have a hiring pipeline, where

we are able to attract teachers of color and Montessorians of color." At Cedar Hill, all administrators expressed that this work is fluid and ongoing.

At New Heights, all the administrators had ideas of how they could move CRP-ABAR to the next level. The Black administrator evoked, "We have to implement policies from the county level, the state level, the federal level; policies that will really seriously impact not just children, not just what's happening in our school, but children all across this nation." The other Black school leader emphasized,

> Probably the only thing we could focus on is to be able to fund these activities better or to keep them growing–not just to have them, but to make them grow. So, as the years go on, they keep increasing in sophistication and intensity.

One Latinx administrator stated,

> I think Number 1 is that awareness, knowing that it (bias) happens. You have to check yourself as an administrator. You have to monitor your own way of thinking. It is going to be forever and ever and this is the only way.

The other Latinx administrator said, "I'm hoping to nurture some other school leaders, teachers for MSJ. I'm always looking to pass the baton because most of the people are younger than us anyway." Administrators at New Heights realized that to carry this work to the next level, there had to be both short- and long-term strategic planning.

At Rapid River, all administrators shared concrete examples of how they would move their school to the next level. A White school leader at Rapid River said, "One of the responsibilities of the Board is to make sure that we are in sound financial footing and can provide for the needs of the administration and faculty." The other White administrator added, "Also make sure our institutional structures reflect our commitment to ABAR and CRP. All our

board members are required to go through a systemic racism workshop." One of the Black administrators expressed, "I think one of the first steps that we're doing is we are opening a training center and ABAR is going to be a part of that training center." The other Black administrator articulated, "Continue to be courageous with teachers, parents, and donors that might not exactly understand how important our mission work is to our academic success." At Rapid River, administrators were excited at the prospect of expanding and supporting the implementation of a Montessori ABAR training center. Because CRP-ABAR work is fluid, it appears that administrators at all three schools are looking for ways to expand, enhance, and support the ongoing work.

Administrators-School Leaders Focus Question 3

The third administrators-school leaders focus question follows: How do you see CRP-ABAR impacting your students of color? The codes to emerge when the administrators-school leaders at Cedar Hill, New Heights, and Rapid River were all questioned about how they saw CRP-ABAR impacting their students of color included self-empowerment and no impact due to the opportunity gap.

At Cedar Hill, it was noted that administrators did not perceive that there was a positive academic impact for students of color as a result of the implementation of CRP-ABAR. This point was emblematic of the following statement from a White administrator:

> The attendance across the board is not as good as it should be here. . . . Yeah, if you look at past data, it does not look good. Our state data, which is what I spend the most time looking, at very clearly has a discrepancy between particularly in math achievement and students of color and socioeconomically disadvantaged students bad. There's a very concerning gap.

The other White administrator reiterated this perception, “We noticed an opportunity gap about 2 years ago. We noticed our Black and Brown students were not meeting proficiency on the standardized tests. Still need to grow in these areas. I do believe there is implicit bias.” A Black administrator said she saw CRP-ABAR impacting by,

> Holding students of color up in contrast to how they have typically been held traditionally in society. Messaging to them that their experience is real, that they matter, that they are important, and that they can use this experiential information to be changemakers.

The opportunity or achievement gaps were realities of which all administrators were aware and were concerned about their continuum.

At New Heights, the administrators believed that although there were many benefits to implementing CRP-ABAR, the academic outcomes anticipated had not yet materialized. A Black administrator stated,

> I don’t really see a big difference in behavior because we haven’t been really having major problems with any of our students of color; because we’ve always, from the beginning, listened to our students–all of them. I haven’t really seen a big change in the attendance. . . . I’m not sure about that (academic outcomes): I’m not sure.”

A Black school leader opined,

> They feel good about themselves. They feel that the school feels good about them and the teachers feel equally as good about them. . . . Academically, I think it supports them, even more than culturally because kids in a general sense, they don’t do well when they, . . . when people don’t expect much from them. But when people expect a lot from them and support them, they tend to try their best and do better.

A Latinx administrator revealed,

> I think that overall, it was good for their self-esteem. I think they really felt included. What I think came out are more things like there were more courageous conversations: . . . some of the staff that have kids here talked about incidents that they might have not brought up, like people making fun of people's hair texture and things like that. I feel overall the staff is moving in the right direction. . . . if the staff is moving in the right direction, eventually it will have greater impact on the students.

Administrators at New Heights conceded that CRP-ABAR did enhance the self-esteem of students of color; however, there was no definitive acknowledgement of how it affected students' academic outcomes.

At Rapid River, administrators spoke about how CRP-ABAR had a positive impact on students of color; however, like the administrators at the other two schools, they did not see an impact on academic outcomes. A White administrator shared,

> I will absolutely own that we have an achievement gap between African American and White students. It is our top priority to address that. I will say that I do believe the work we have done is valuable and has had a positive impact on our students. Most importantly, I can finally say that I do believe the adults in the building are all on the same page–working to interrupt racism and its impact. I do think that our students of color feel like they matter that they have a sense of belonging, empowerment, (and) agency."

A White school leader said,

> It seems like a very cohesive group from the classrooms I've been in, but I don't know. Like any school, we have behavioral issues: Some students are better than others. I

> couldn't tell you if it has impacted the students of color any more than the others. It wouldn't surprise me if it does. . . . The academic outcomes, . . . we carefully review the state academic testing results. Our results overall as a school are above the average for the city. . . . But we have struggled with what you know is called the achievement gap. Our African American students have not achieved at the same rate.

A Black administrator stated,

> I think that our students are . . . It just seems like they have an emotional intelligence that I don't see in a lot of other students at other schools, whether it's public or private. . . . Our students organized a Black Lives Matter March. Our students organized several big works projects where they had maps of America and they placed pictures of different places where unjust things happened. And they said that in our America, this is where we want things to stop and this is what we want to be true. That was their work. It was their words and it was self-guided. I think that our students of color are more confident in doing things that interest them, because we have this environment.

Another Black administrator offered,

> I think again, having them, giving them agency. So that's one of our specific goals. We want more of our students to have that agency. We want to ensure that every student leaves here with an ABAR lens and with agency. I think for us, just like everyone else, there's an opportunity gap here. . . . There is an education debt that we, like everyone else has accrued.

All the administrators at Rapid River spoke about the academic achievement gap at their school.

Some of the barriers to emerge at all three school when administrators were asked about the challenges to implementing CRP-ABAR were recognizing bias, the fidelity of

Montessori, and White fragility. Some of the benefits at all three schools were self-empowerment, dismantling racism, and improved school climate (see Table 2).

Table 2

Administrators' Focus Group Question 4: What are some challenges-benefits of implementing CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting?

Cedar Hill	Challenges	Benefits
Blacks	Code: Recognizing bias. "I think just workload. There is a point, teachers must execute, day-by-day, minute-by-minute. The self-reflection that is required to be conscious of racism and bias and your own bias and other people's bias, that's work!"	Code: Self-empowerment. "Children's lights shine very bright."
White	Code: Montessori fidelity. "Are we really implementing with fidelity, our Montessori pedagogy? Anytime there's a gap or a need somewhere, it's like they find something else to fill it . . . rather than maybe stepping back and saying why does this gap exist anyways? Are we doing what we said we're going to do well? Do we have a gap because we're not, you know, that we could solve by just better implementing Montessori pedagogy?" Code: Recognizing bias-White privilege. "People have blind spots, they may not realize what they may be perpetuating. . . . We are vetting for those things that are nonteachable for our White candidates, namely to be able to recognize their White privilege and being able to speak to it, and see past that in order to be part of our team and reach all students."	Code: Dismantling racism. "Well, I mean to me it's not Montessori specific. It needs to be happening everywhere . . . . It's a necessary conversation societally." Code: Self-empowerment. "Our students have agency. And they have desire and drive to act consciously in opposition to racism and bias. I believe with CRP, students can do that with empathy in the forefront. They are learning truth: This hard history."
Asian	Code: Montessori fidelity. "I think that a lot of times when the challenges are brought up around Montessori pedagogy, there is a misrepresentation of what we are supposed to be doing as Montessori teachers. All this should be easily incorporated and really that should be the basis of how a Montessori classroom runs in a community like Cedar Hill."	
New Heights	Challenges	Benefits
Blacks	Code: Buy-in. "One challenge has been the fact that some people have been resistant and so I'm not sure who is on board and who is not really on board, simply because I am a Black woman. And I don't know if they're doing it because they think they must do it	Code: School climate. "I think one of the benefits is that you have a better school. If everyone feels that that they have an equal chance and that they are welcome in a school, the entire

	or because they want to do it." Code: Alignment of Montessori-CRP-ABAR. "One of the challenges that I've noticed is because Montessori is an eclectic project. It's a total development of the whole child. It doesn't allow you to just single out and focus on one aspect of education. Therefore, CRP-ABAR needs to be in all aspects because of the focus of the school is the total concept of the child."	climate of the school changes. We really wanted to make sure that when our children leave, they can say, hey, that was an ideal type of situation for me as a child." Code: Dismantling racism. "Those benefits are also the challenges because you benefit from those challenges. They're difficult, but those are the benefits that we reap."
Latinx	Code: Alignment of Montessori-CRP-ABAR. "Definitely, the same framework of Montessori and those who are trained in Montessori to think that CRP-/ABAR is already embedded in their philosophy is an obstacle." Code: White-Latinx fragility. "People are all uncomfortable just because, obviously White fragility is a real thing and that's a huge thing, White people being uncomfortable. They're uncomfortable for different reasons. But I think understanding that we're all at different levels is important. . . . I'm trying to have open discussion and to deal with my own stuff. There's a lot of colonialism in my way of thinking due to my Latinx background. There is a lot of judgment, liberalism in my way of thinking that can be damaging and hurtful."	Code: School climate. "The one benefit is the inclusiveness of those students and serving those students to the extent in which we can from the standpoint of educating those students. I think we have the trained teachers. We have the materials that we can help them be successful with. We have everything." Code: Courageous conversations. "I'm proud that we're doing this work because I really feel that this is reflective of society right now. I feel like this work is very important because I've had students who support, in some ways, the people in office right now and we have been able to have discussions. It's not always easy and, of course, it's always thrilling when you see that our students come out on the side of justice or what you perceive to be the side of justice; and they're taking initiative and they're the ones making changes on their college campuses or they're political… But it's also just as important for those that don't agree with you because, at the end of the day, it's those people that we must have the conversations with."
Rapid River	Challenges	Benefits
Black	Code: Montessori fidelity-Alignment of CRP-ABAR. "If you don't come to the work really	Code: Accountability for students of color. "We're an ABAR school that

	understanding the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and how to make it concrete and learner centered, it could be an interesting mix like figuring out the balance and figuring out your flow . . . so, is it today Montessori and tomorrow ABAR? . . . It's like Montessori all the time and ABAR all the time and public school all the time. Just having a full complement of Montessori materials and then having people that know how to use them, is a challenge because we have a mixture of expertise in Montessori… We have… multiple levels of knowledge about high fidelity Montessori." Code: Effective Communication "The challenge is you could talk about this all day, every day. The challenge is how to talk about it in a way that doesn't take over everything else that you need to do . . . So, the challenge is making sure it's developmentally appropriate."	utilizes Montessori to get us there. And I think we just now have people on the same page with that. Because for purist Montessori people that have really been taught a very specific way of thinking about education, they were seeing it as extra when our argument is that it is the cause, right? It's not extra. It's why we are doing this to begin with. So, yeah, it's an accountability check to make sure we're doing our work and for the people that deserve it."
White	Code: Alignment of Montessori-CRP-ABAR. "I will say I think Montessori is the ideal environment, great for embedding this. But we must interrogate Montessori also, the culture of Montessori, where White privilege and White normative paradigm shows up. But if we really take to the heart the notion of following the child, then it's a natural extension."	Code: Global education "Fuller education, looking at every child and their life experiences. Trying to radically follow them and meet their needs. As a composite, ABAR and Montessori together, are able to provide a safe space for them to explore, discuss, engage, and develop a fuller version of their identity. The benefit is the global commitment."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

The administrators at all three schools were consistent in their commitment to implementing CRP-ABAR within their schools. They validated the importance of supporting and sustaining this work by providing training and resources and noting where they fell short. In Table 3, a summary of the codes for each school that pertains the focus group questions for the administrators is provided.

Table 3

Administrators' Summary of Focus Group Codes

Focus group question	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
1. How did you get involved in CRP-ABAR and why did it become a school-wide focus?	School's mission Providing access closing the gap	Closing the gap School's mission	School's mission Providing access Closing the gap
2. In what ways has the school supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR?	Open conversations Teacher training Policies	Open conversations Teacher training Policies	Open conversations Teacher training Policies
2a. How can you move your school to the next level?	Systems awareness-policies Teacher training	Systems awareness-policies Funding Teacher training Future leadership	Systems awareness-policies Funding Montessori-ABAR-teacher training Future leadership
3. How do you see CRP-ABAR impacting your students of color?	Self-empowerment No impact-opportunity gap	Self-empowerment No impact-opportunity gap	Self-empowerment No impact-opportunity gap
4. What are some of the challenges of implement-ing CRP-ABAR within your Montessori program?	Recognizing bias Recognizing White privilege Montessori-Montessori fidelity	Buy-in Alignment of Montessori CRP-ABAR White-Latinx fragility	Montessori fidelity Alignment of CRP-ABAR Effective communication
4a. What are some of the benefits of implementing CRP-ABAR within your Montessori program?	Self-empowerment Dismantling racism	School climate Dismantling racism Courageous conversations	Accountability for students of color Global education

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

Teachers' Focus Group Responses

The researchers conducted the audio taped, semistructured interview questions with the teachers consisting of eight questions and with 14 subquestions (see Appendix E). During the arduous process of collecting and analyzing the data, they decided to hone in on four focus

group questions. These four questions were the most suitable to examine the relationship between the information gathered by the teacher interviews and the four overall arching questions. The overall perception at all three schools when asked about the school's focus on CRP-ABAR contained both curriculum approaches and systemic approaches. The responses were presented in both narrative and chart format.

Teachers' Focus Question 1. Teachers' Focus Question 1 follows: What is this school's focus on CRP-ABAR curriculum? At the three schools, the focus of CRP-ABAR was either through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach. The codes that repeatedly came up, across all racial groups, when discussing the schools' focus on CRP-ABAR curriculum with teachers at Cedar Hill, New Heights, and Rapid River follow: ASHOKA Changemakers; books, literature and classroom materials; Color Brave-courageous conversations, and training all stakeholders. The code words follow: ASHOKA Changemakers.

At Cedar Hill, CRP-ABAR was implemented through a curriculum approach using the Changemakers program where the stories of social entrepreneurs who seek to solve problems were examined. A White teacher stated,

> The way things are is not good enough so we study someone who has made a significant change, if not to their community, then to the entire world. So a lot of the Changemakers we study cross continental, across time, impacted the global order and history . . . showing that this change starts in small immeasurable ways.

One purpose of the Changemakers program is to motivate children at an early age to strive to solve problems and become empathetic leaders within their own communities. A Black teacher explained,

> I would say that our Changemaker unit is created with the intention of giving children the opportunity to access a diverse array of hero journey Changemakers. Beyond the Changemaker curriculum, I think that there–I don't even think–I know that there can be more intention around having ABAR work throughout the Montessori curriculum and throughout our school in ways that don't yet exist.

The primary vehicle for delivering CRP-ABAR instruction at Cedar Hill was with the Changemakers program. The code words follow: books, literature, and classroom materials.

At New Heights, CRP-ABAR was introduced into the curriculum through literature. One Black teacher offered, "Then they came up with this study. And then they kind of dictated what we were going to read. It gave us more of a guide as to what we were going to do." They used books with diversity and developed lesson plans around the themes to guide the instruction. A Latinx teacher responded, "We have books and lesson plans and we talk to the kids about it. We have meetings. We have workshops. We talk to the parents about it." Teachers at New Heights focused on literature to teach their students about ABAR. The code words follow: Color Brave and courageous conversations, training all stakeholders.

At Rapid River, a systemic approach was the primary method of teaching CRP-ABAR. A Black teacher stated, "With everything going on over the world, we make sure that we have this ABAR focus. And the work that we do in a school community, reflect what we want to see in the world." In the beginning, the focus was on the staff. A White teacher said, "The ABAR work that we do, we started off doing it with ourselves, not with the children. We started off with ourselves trying to become the prepared teachers we need to be for everyone." The teachers at Rapid River also talked about having courageous conversations and being color brave instead of color blind, in addition to the training in their systemic approach to teaching CRP-ABAR.

According to the perceptions of the teachers at all three schools, CRP-ABAR connects to Montessori philosophy through peace-global education and the prepared teacher and prepared environment. Table 4 is a summary of the teachers' responses.

Table 4

Teachers' Focus Group Question 1b: How Does CRP-ABAR Connect or Not Connect to Montessori?

Teachers	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
Blacks	Code: Montessori philosophy. "I think that it does connect because Montessori, from what I understand is really about teaching to the whole child and really seeing where that child is at. All those cultures can be introduced in a way to also marry with that foundation. So, I believe that it's possible. I just think that it has to be done consistently." Code: Recognizing Biases-ABAR lens. "I think that it doesn't connect to school in a way because it starts at home and we as adults . . . have to keep our biases to ourselves. When we learn to not be bias in the classroom, then we have antibias happening in the classroom."	Code: Peace Education-Global citizens. "I think giving them those tools and those skills to be good citizens, which I believe Montessori does, is just so closely related to with ABAR and CRP." Code: Peace Education-Global citizens. "I think it connects to Montessori on so many levels. One of the reasons I, myself, was attracted to Montessori was because I felt that everybody was universally accepted and for me, I think it helped us find a way to connect."	Code: Recognizing biases-ABAR lens. "I think it connects with Montessori in the sense that my understanding of Maria Montessori was that she was invested in social justice. So, to me, ABAR is in the same category of making sure we are enlightening our students." Code: Prepared teacher-environment. "The connection is that we are able to have connections to the things we study and the work we do in the classroom."
Latinx	Codes: Montessori philosophy and recognizing biases-ABAR lens. "I think deep down at a philosophical level, it definitely does. We can't do that without addressing inequity, without addressing racism head on, without addressing White supremacy. So, if we're going to do Montessori here, we're going to have to do that."	Code: Prepared teacher-environment. 'I believe there was a connection because Montessori first of all, the adults in the classroom, we are the leader or guides or models. So, once we did that we understood the reasoning behind that and it made it easier for the kids to follow." Code: Peace Education-Global citizens. "I believe CRP-ABAR	Code: Recognizing bias-ABAR lens. "Really taking all the materials and creating . . . and the content, the story line is the same, but how do you put the ABAR lens on top of it by saying who's missing?"

		connects to Montessori. In Montessori, we are not only focused on ourselves, or the school community. We are asked to also view the global community. CRP-ABAR allows us to open our minds and hearts to help us view the global community and develop a better understanding of others' needs."	
White	Code: Prepared teacher-environment. "I think it directly connects. You have to help be that connect. Be aware of the Montessori curriculum which is Eurocentric." Code: Montessori philosophy. "I think it connects in the . . . well the sense of the high expectations for all and following the interest of the child and the sense of order…however, there is something that does not resonate culturally. I'm not sure what that is, not clear to me yet."	Code: Peace Education-Global citizens. "Everything can connect to Montessori but what made it so pertinent, is that it connected to the children in our community." Code: Peace Education-Global citizens. "CRP-ABAR connects to the Peace Education and cultural lessons in the Montessori philosophy."	Code: Prepared teacher-environment. "You know, Montessori talks about the prepared environment, the prepared teacher, following the child. You can't have a prepared teacher without this work." Code: Montessori philosophy. "Well they need to connect because there's this global universal concept that Montessori created that it's not just us." Code: Peace Education-Global citizens "I think it, ABAR, connects with Montessori from the standpoint of the curriculum. I think the curriculum lends itself to learning about and studying people from all over the world and many different cultures and looking at the different environments and the different needs of the people."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

The teachers across racial lines at all three schools believed that CRP-ABAR did connect to Montessori on a philosophical level. It connected through Montessori's belief in the potential of each child. They also believed that it connected through promoting global citizenship and the interconnectedness of everyone. There was some mention of the Eurocentric aspect of the curriculum; however, it did lend itself to being able to adapt and expand to include the narratives of non-Europeans.

Teachers told stories of how they had observed CRP-ABAR within their classrooms and at school-wide events. Table 5 includes anecdotes of teachers' narratives.

Table 5

Teachers' Focus Question 2. How Have You Observed CRP-ABAR in Your Classroom-School-Wide Events?

Teachers	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
Blacks	Code: Cultural celebrations. "Our Changemakers' parade is really cool. They get to dress up as Changemakers. It's really fun to see them because they get to also then write about Changemakers and present about the Changemaker they're choosing to embody." Code: Cultural celebrations. "It was cultural day in everyone's class. Parents from every class brought food from their culture. Sometime for this year, Chinese New Year, we had a Chinese parent come through and give a lesson on the giving of the money."	Code: Conversations. "I think it's just daily conversations . . . I really try to just relate with children and with parents and understand and respect everybody's decisions and their choices." Code: Cultural celebration. "One of the things we did was we invited the parent to make a dish for the whole class and so everybody got to try it . . . They were surprised that so many of them actually liked it. . . . So that kind of changed their attitudes to what's Indian food. So now everybody wanted it. So, I think being culturally relevant in that way, showing them that different cultures can actually be more of an enriching experience than a negative one."	Code: Diversity of .materials. "I create a lot of works that create positive images of Black fathers and families, lots of work with self-portraits and skin colors. Our most important lesson and what I teach my students is that our bodies can be like a present. You can't ever tell what a present is like until you unwrap it and people are just like that, too." Code: "Recognizing biases. "And so it makes me consciously think about the decisions that I make and the way that I interact with students and my word choices and listening to their conversations and being careful about the things that they discuss and how they express themselves and making sure that they have that frame of mind that we expect and that we want our children to have."

Latinx	Code: Recognizing bias. "It's like we don't want to do it, history just like how everybody does it. Just buy a textbook and teach it. You want to do it with a really mindful lens like ABAR and towards the oppression and the things that have been part of our history as well and maybe not talked about as much." Codes: Literature. "One of the really powerful books that sparked conversation for us last year was *When a Bully is the President*. We're also calling out the bullying that we have towards ourselves or others, that's part of colonialism, that's part of White supremacy, sometimes when we're putting ourselves down or putting others down."	Code: Recognizing biases. "How do you think your friend feels when you say that? And he said he was very sad. I said you see you said something without knowing what it was and your best friend, the person that you like very much is Black and you're saying you don't like Black people. So, I don't understand that." Code: Literature. "Although he wasn't relating to it culturally because he was not Black, but he did relate to it; and constantly reflect and sometimes even cry because within the story your heard things that happened to that child because not only her race, but her mental disability. And (he) would share and reflect and was able to talk about his experience with his sibling. And the students in the class were able to understand and kind of empathize with him to a certain extent. But it was the connection that they made through the story."	Code: Conversations. "So, it was a young man who was shot and killed by a police officer in the neighborhood. And so, we had a personal acquaintance, I mean, you know the community held him and the children were really terrified. And then when President Trump was elected, the children were really terrified. And we had held a restorative justice circle because the White children were afraid that the Black children would see them differently, would hold them as racist. And they were really afraid for that. They were also really afraid for the Black children that something could hurt them or harm them. So, there were many layers of concern for safety."
Whites	Code: Conversation. "Had a student who used some inappropriate language toward other students in the classroom, students of color, had to pass off to administration. They met with that student and talked about historically how that term has been used and they were all spoken with. They went through the process, make that good, make that a learning experience."	Code: Diversity of materials. "But they loved having somebody representing . . . I mean I could see it was a big turn on for all my children of color. But I could see for the other children not to see your standard baby doll, which is sold at every other Dollar Store in America." Codes: Literature and diversity of materials. "More books about Blacks as protagonists and more lessons on diverse cultures.	Code Recognizing biases. "We're not trying to raise awareness to create challenges, but understanding to walk in my mind, you know, walk in my shoes for a mile kind of thing." Code: Recognizing biases. "We are a predominantly White team, only have Ms. Susie, and previously, predominantly Black students. But now we are focused on this cultural work. And we recognize that we all have bias when it comes to certain norms about how adults and children are supposed to interact." Code: Recognizing Biases

	"Bringing an ABAR lens to everything done in the classroom and pointing out biases."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

At Cedar Hill and New Heights, the teachers across racial lines were more likely to mention literature, diversity of materials, and cultural celebrations as the ways that they had observed CRP-ABAR in their classrooms and at school-wide events. At Rapid River, the teachers were more likely to convey stories of recognizing biases to demonstrate how they had observed it. Table 6 includes a summary of the perceptions of how teachers at all three schools viewed the impact of CRP-ABAR on their students of color's learning.

Table 6

Teachers' Focus Group Question 3: How do You See CRP-ABAR Impacting Your Students (Students of Color)?

Teachers	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
Blacks	Code: Inclusion. "I definitely see that it could have the potential because, for the students of color in the classroom, it gives them a sense of pride to give them that representation, to learn more in-depth about their culture, so it's priceless. It's a priceless curriculum that has long-term positive effects on their self-esteem, on their outlook, their education."	Code: Inclusion. ""I feel like it's impacting because people don't feel like they're on the outside looking in." Code: Motivation. "Academically, my class did better. They did better in math, but, this year, they did better in reading."	Code: Inclusion. "Since we started ABAR, I have made sure that those children of color I have are not forgotten." Code: Mutual respect. "So again, they benefit from gaining respect, that mutual respect."
Latinx	Code: No impact. "Like right now, I'm not seeing like this like the light turn on. And a lot of them have like trauma and things that they're sifting through every day before they can even come to school."	Code: Motivation. "They were more eager to work on lessons. They were more excited at the end. In the beginning they didn't even want to read. They were always against the theme but by the end they came up with very good activities and projects and things that they did."	Code: No impact. "Our African American children do not perform on those assessments in the same way that Caucasian children do. And our children of color that are not of African heritage perform higher."
Whites	Code: No impact. "Well, I think that it's still new work. I think we're not necessarily see change overnight." Code: Inclusion. "I hope it impacts them in that they feel more safe within themselves and safe with others."	Code: No impact. "I'm trying to think of my African American students, if their scores went up. But I think they stayed the same."	Code: No impact. "When I'm looking at most of my children, I'm seeing that everyone can do it. Why are there differences in achievement? And you often see that along racial lines." Code: Self-advocacy. "I do feel like they make a greater effort to communicate and call it out when they see it. . . . I think they're being more vocal."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

The White teachers at all three schools and the Latinx teachers at Cedar Hill and Rapid River were more inclined to cite the lack of academic progress while acknowledging the academic gap. The Black teachers at all three schools believed that CRP-ABAR was positively impacting their students of color through social and emotional growth. However, only at New Heights did a Black teacher and a Latinx teacher mention that there was a positive impact on their academics, particularly in reading. In Table 7, the teachers at the three schools delineates the challenges and benefits of implementing CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting).

Table 7

Teachers' Focus Group Question 4: What are Some Challenges-Benefits of Implementing CRP-ABAR in Your Classroom?

Cedar Hill	Challenges	Benefits
Blacks	Code: Recognizing biases. "I think the challenge for my teachers of Caucasian and European descent is now having to check themselves. Did I do anything to contribute to a biased environment?" Code: Doing it alone. "I think the main one (challenge) feels like I'm doing it alone. I feel like I'm on my own sometimes. Or like I'm spearheading it."	Code: Inclusiveness. "We have strong classroom culture and it's because we all see each other as one." Code: Inclusiveness. "Students of color will feel more successful because hearing and seeing teachers talking and addressing issues that are valid and (that) will continue to be valid for them."
Latinx	Code: Inequities. "I think the way in which inequities still manifest within our school. Our Black and Brown students still don't do as well in math; for example, in high-stakes testing in comparison to the White children. So that's an area of growth for us." Code: Recognizing biases. "It's been a lot of breaking down the barriers and obstacles and unpacking the trauma and kind of finding out where we can connect."	Code: Inclusiveness. "I feel like they feel they're part of this community. I think there're a few students that still struggle with that, but, at least in my classroom, it feels cohesive." Code: Builds empathy. "I think all students really need it. And they need to have this lens of understanding others and understanding outside of myself. And like it helps you kind of see the world in a way that's more informative and more like empathetic."
White	Code: Developmentally appropriate. "One challenge is finding age appropriate ways to deal with some of those horrifying events." Code: Home-school alignment. "If there is conflict within the family, that can be hard. For instance, if a family thinks one thing and the school thinks another thing."	Code: Inclusiveness. "Keeps everyone here, keeps them engaged, builds that community, and holds us together." Code: Inclusiveness. "They come here and they're able to make mistakes and try again. And feel that love and compassion from their teachers and peers because we're teaching it all together."

New Heights		
Blacks	Code: Time. "Being that we test and have standardized test, it was really a challenge to find the reading time to do the activities for each book because it's more than just having them write questions or answer questions." Code: Time. "It's more a lot of the paperwork on top of the paperwork I already must do."	Code: Self-reflection. "I think I took a closer look at my students and how they interacted with each other. And things I found acceptable before or things that I thought oh don't worry about, that it's not a big deal; and realizing that for them, it was a big deal, which is why they brought it to my attention in the first place." Code: Courageous conversations. "I think the benefits are that we had some deep conversations that I don't think would have happened otherwise."
Latinx	Code: Time. "There's so much testing and so much to do that sometimes it was kind of hard to try to put the lesson plans that we had created, and then, together with the other things." Code: Communication (White fragility). "I think the challenges come from the teacher because I think we ourselves have to be comfortable talking about the different subject matters with the kids." Code: Communication (White fragility). "I believe the challenges are adapting and sometimes it seems like it was too much, it was pushing too much going to the extreme. I felt there wasn't a balance. It felt too pushy."	Code: Inclusiveness. "So being more aware of all our students and being able to relate to each and every one of them in the things that they find in the classroom, I think that's the major benefit." Code: Inclusiveness. "I feel the kids feel more at home. They feel safer. They feel more like I belong here." Code: Inclusiveness. "Making sure every child has something they can connect with in the classroom."
White	Code: Communication (White fragility). "The majority of my students are Hispanics. I know from the families that they were always like well why are you just always focus ing on African Americans? Like the world is bigger than African American studies. And I didn't want to trivialize that. That's a challenge." Code: Time. "At the beginning, it was finding books and things to talk about."	Code: Courageous conversations. "It allowed greater conversation and it reached more children. And a new literature, something for all of us to investigate and enjoy." Code: Exposure. "I think they got to see a whole other side of everything because most kids are Hispanic and they don't know anything about any other culture."

Rapid River		
Blacks	Code: Developmentally appropriate. "Just making sure its age appropriate, especially when the topic is so heavy." Code: Home-school alignment. "Another challenge is communicating your plans to parents so they're prepared to having a follow-up conversation with their children and not undermining what she (the teacher) said but supporting that." Code: Time. "I wonder if sometimes we have enough time to really roll it out. Sometimes we're so like check, check. Okay. I'm good. I did it."	Code: Exposure. "It's just like the benefit is the exposure and the tone." Code: Mutual respect. "It's a uniting activity for the students to recognize difference and accept them; not just necessarily tolerate them, but like genuinely accept it because they want someone to respect them–you know, be in their shoes." Code: Mutual respect. "How to treat someone with respect. Just instilling this in them for life."
Latinx	Code: Time. "So yeah, so it takes so much time. So I think that the challenge would be the time and the expertise."	Code: Recognizing bias and self-empowerment. "If you don't do it, you're perpetuating racism and stereotypes and bias. If you do it, at least you have a design that interrupts that so that the likelihood that you're going to have children that like themselves, feel good about themselves is much greater."
White	Code: Time. "My biggest challenge is time for lesson development. But I also think there needs to be an ABAR curriculum in the classroom." Code: Home-school alignment. "Media always has its way to put a slant on situations. So it can cause our good practices with ABAR here at Rapid River to hit a dead end, to have a speed bump, metaphorically speaking."	Code: Recognizing bias. "I like not keeping them in the dark. Understand the difference and be able to recognize biases and where they see it. Where it shows up and how to deal with it and how to pinpoint bias and racism and pull it out into the open to be examined." Code: Self-reflection. "It's my moment when I get with my family members and my friends that don't know about this and just kind of say, look, I'm not really trying to upset you or change who you are, but think about this for a second. . . . Think about that before you're so settled in on your thoughts and beliefs that you're ready to scream that this is the right way to think and live. It's not always."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

At Cedar Hill, the challenges for teachers implementing CRP-ABAR varied and there were no obvious commonalities along racial lines. At New Heights, across racial lines, the challenge for implementing CRP-ABAR was time. At the time of the study, teachers were bogged down with a great deal of paperwork required from both the district

and the school administrators. During the self-study process for accreditation, the school administrators worked with the teachers to reduce the amount of paperwork substantially. The most prominent challenge amongst Latinx and White teachers was in the realm of communication, under the guise of White fragility. There were several instances where these teachers expressed that they were being pushed into conversations with which they were not comfortable. At Rapid River, across racial lines, teachers believed time was a challenge to implementing CRP-ABAR due to the demands of lesson preparation.

Across racial lines, teachers at Cedar Hill and the Latinx teachers at New Heights, the primary benefit teachers explicated for implementing CRP-ABAR was inclusiveness. At New Heights, teachers also believed courageous conversations were a benefit of implementing CRP-ABAR. At Rapid River, Black teachers cited mutual respect, as a positive gain of implementing CRP-ABAR. Latinx and White teachers offered recognizing bias as benefits. Table 8 includes a summary of the focus group codes for the teachers at the three school in the study.

Table 8

Teachers' Summary of Focus Group Codes

Teacher focus group questions	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
1. What is the school's focus on CRP-ABAR curriculum?	ASHOKA Changemakers	Literature themes Class materials Books	Color Brave and courageous conversations Equitable resources Training all stakeholders
1a. How does CRP-ABAR connect to Montessori?	Montessori philosophy Recognizing biases	Cultural lessons Global citizens Peace education	Prepared environment Prepared teacher ABAR lens
2a. How have you observed CRP-ABAR in your classroom-school-wide event	Cultural celebrations Creative writing Literature Conversations	Cultural celebrations Literature Diversity of materials Conversations	Identity Recognizing biases Cultural awareness Conversations
3. In what ways do you see CRP-ABAR impacting your students (students of color)?	Inclusion No Impact	Inclusion Make connections Motivation No Impact	Inclusion Mutual respect No impact Self-advocacy
4. What are some of the challenges of implementing CRP-ABAR in your classroom?	Doing it alone Recognizing bias Inequities Developmentally appropriate Home-school alignment	Time Communication (White fragility)	Developmentally appropriate Time Home-School Alignment
4a. What are some of the benefits of implementing CRP-ABAR in your classroom?	Inclusiveness Builds empathy	Self-reflection Courageous conversations Inclusiveness Exposure	Exposure Mutual respect Recognizing bias Self-empowerment Self-reflection

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

Parents' Initial Responses to Focus Group Questions 1 Through 4

Parents' focus group responses. The parent interviews consisted of five overall questions with 13 subquestions (see Appendix E). Throughout the tedious process of

sorting and analyzing the data, the researchers limited the focus group questions to four that would most appropriately provide insight to the four overall guiding questions. The responses were presented in both narrative and chart format.

Researchers' observations and building rapport. To establish rapport with the parents and create a framework for the interviews, the researchers began with three questions to the parents:

1. Why did you choose to send your children to this school?
2. How important is Montessori to you?
3. How important is CRP-ABAR to you?

Across racial lines at all three schools, a great majority of the parents cited Montessori as the reason for sending their children to their respective schools. The second most common answer was that they were seeking an alternative to traditional schooling. Although all the schools have a known commitment to CRP-ABAR, only one parent who was White and happened to be on the board of directors of Cedar Hill, mentioned both equity and Montessori as the reason he brought his child to the school. Now that their children were enrolled in their schools, most parents at all three schools believed that both Montessori and CRP-ABAR were very important to them.

Focus Group Question 1. How important is the parent population? At Cedar Hill, New Heights, and Rapid River, some of the codes that were identified when interviewed about the importance of parental population follow: diversity-enrich the school, cross-cultural socialization, parental support, and alignment of values. Only at Cedar Hill did Black and Latinx parents express the lack of effective communication

between the school and the parents of color. The code words follow: diversity-enrich the school.

At Cedar Hill, parents believed the parental population provided a forum for diverse people to communicate and get involved to support the school. An Asian parent said, “I think that diversity is important because ultimately, I think the parents come in and they bring their richness to the school and their cultural backgrounds and their experiences and everything that they have experienced in life.” A Black parent expressed, “For a school to function well, you need parents to be able to be involved and support, so that matters.” The parents at Cedar Hill saw the diversity of parents as an asset to the school. The code words follow: cross-cultural socialization and parental support.

At New Heights, the parents talked about the social connections outside of school that they might not otherwise have been able to create. One White parent said, “It’s very nice that we have parents that we’re friends with whose kids also go here. That’s probably a bigger factor in determining how long we stay here.” A Black parent further supported the importance of the parent population by stating, “When we come together and see each other, chaperoning at birthday parties and at these functions here, the parents are awesome.” When parents make an intentional choice to send their children to a diverse school, there are greater opportunities for cross-cultural socialization.

The parents at New Heights also emphasized how supportive the parents were in all school and classroom functions. A White parent said, “I see the parents are very involved. I see the parents helping out and doing what they can to contribute to the children and the classrooms.” Many parents at Rapid River also expressed the importance

of parental involvement and support for the school. The code word follows: alignment of values.

At Rapid River, a Latinx parent communicated,

> Some parents, I see a lot when we have like family functions. We have outings and we don't have bus transportation. So a lot of people–a lot of parents do volunteer saying, Hey, I'll take an extra kid or Hey, I got room for two extra kids.

A Black parent said, "I think it can make or break a school almost. . . . And so, I think this is important for us, as parents, to participate in every level of our children's education–big or small." The parents at New Heights and Rapid River both expressed that the parent population created a family-like environment at the schools.

At Rapid River, the parents talked about how their values were aligned and the social connections that they were able to establish. A Black parent stated, "There're schools that I wouldn't go to because I know the family values don't align with ours. Where they're very involved in consumerism rather than education." A White parent said,

> . . . so I think without committed parents, and then some of those efforts to really engage with the curriculum from ABAR, all the way just into regular educational curriculum during the day, I think those things get more difficult without engaged parents.

The parents at Rapid River claimed a strong alliance with the values of ABAR that the school professed. The code follows: lack of effective communication.

Although most parents at Cedar Hill stressed the importance of communication, there were some negative experiences along the lines of communication for parents of

color. Black parent and Latinx parents expressed that they believed the voices of the Black and Brown parents were not being heard and the needs of Black children were not being met, which led to an exodus of Black families from the school. One Black parent stated,

> A lot, a lot of the families have left the school. They believe that the school is not reaching the Black children. You know, we have an achievement gap here that is not closing. And part of the reason we have it, is the teachers are not recognizing their own biases.

A Latinx parent said,

> Many like-power-led positions are by White folks. And, as much as myself and other parents of color try to work to make things (better) for everybody, I feel like that big privilege word comes in where I have a profession, I do this at work, I've done so much, and I earn so much, and they come with that mentality to the school.

The parents of color at Cedar Hill expressed the belief that there was a continuum of power dynamics where White parents benefited.

Some parents believed racism is being dismantled through celebrations of diversity. Other parents identified some teachers-staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity. In Table 9, a summary of the parents' responses from the three school sites is provided.

Table 9

Focus Group Question 2: How Have You Observed CRP-ABAR in Your Child's Classroom-School?

Parents	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
Blacks	Code: Teacher-adult Insensitivity. ". . . Threw a piece of paper into the garbage can from far away like a basketball and their class rule says that you walk over to the garbage can and drop it in. So instead of her (teacher) saying something to him, she allowed a first grader to come and chastised him about the class rule." Code: Teacher-adult insensitivity. "I'm really having a hard time forming a bond with your child. . . . He's not doing what he's suppose to and then he gets angry. So I asked, what's happening? I can tell you what I'm hearing in my house. My son is telling me you're not helping him. These are relational issues, not behavioral issues. It is not his responsibility to forge a relationship with you. It is your responsible. Code: Teacher-adult insensitivity. "A kid who is actually my kid's friend, trying to get his attention, called him the 'N' word multiple times. And this is a White child calling my Black child the 'N' word. . . . I did find myself having to take the lead on that and so as the family of the child who was harmed by the words, I didn't see that one handled as well."	Code: Celebrations of diversity. "I thought that was very good actually. Even in the IXL, the other day, they had to read something on Bob Marley, which I thought oh that's good, you do 19th century English literature, but you also do Bob Marley". Code: Celebrations of diversity. "I know they do the Peace March every year and during the last Poetry Festival, I really liked the different emphasis on families. . . . There are children who have different family set-up and I felt good that they could see themselves in those, too. Code: Celebrations of diversity. "We did a Mother's Day Brunch. . . . He wanted to tell me about the seaweed in it. I know it came from them teaching about why they eat it and why it's in their culture."	Code: Dismantling White supremacy. "Whenever they do a research project in upper elementary, there's always an ABAR component. Latinx, they talk about who's the conqueror, who's the oppressor, and who's the oppressed. They have to take off the lens of master's narrative." Code: Dismantling White supremacy "It means striving to create an environment that is ABAR. Which means not just in name but what are our policies? What are our norms? What are our practices?" Code: Dismantling White supremacy. "There was a substitute teacher who he felt was bias. And he said, 'This woman's racists at least bias. . . . And he gave an example: When so and so says something, she says, Boy, sit down. And when so and so says something, she says, Oh, how can I help you? I say all that to say the school gives the kids language, they then apply it, and that's why the school must be willing to hold it (this focus). . . . We had a meeting with that sub with the teacher, talked to the principal. The sub wasn't invited back."

Latinx	Code: Teacher-adult insensitivity. "The children were singing Build a Trump wall during the after-care program. The aftercare White middle-aged female worker (who allowed the children to sing the song) later apologized and was suspended. She eventually left the school." Code: Teacher-adult insensitivity. "A White mother approached a Black boy and accused him of bullying her daughter. The boy was big for his age and clumsy and bumped into everything and everyone, but for them, it was a persistent issue."	Code: Celebrations of diversity "There was actually someone from South Africa, that brought customs from South Africa and she taught both the parents and child. . . . They always do some type of show and tell from different countries." Code: Dismantling racism. "She saw someone darker (her cousin) and she realized that it was different than what she would be and that she would be separated from her. She was 4 years old. I don't think I knew that at 4 years old or was able to interpret that. And that was after something specifically read with Martin Luther King."	Code: Celebrations of diversity. "He said we read about Dr. Martin Luther King. We read about Jackie Joyner Kersey and he was like we read about Black History Month or they did a project about Black History Month."
Asians	Code: Celebration of diversity. "They encourage parents to participate in the cultural, to introduce or present their traditional culture and share with the school."	Code: Celebrations of diversity. "Teachers bring in artifacts and things from the library or if they visited a country. So the kids can look at them and the different foods and stuff and the flags. So they know how to identify the different countries and races and cultures. So you get to see firsthand."	Code: Celebrations of diversity. "I know that they have certain cultural awareness days, special celebrations where the children recite and do performances." Code: Celebrations of diversity. "When I grew up, my mom and dad made sure I kind of blended in and didn't talk about race and tried to be more sort of American and White, since they had just immigrated from the Philippines. So I really like this idea that she has about this being, you know, she's a Brown girl mixed-race girl and for her to have that language."
Whites	Code: Lack of evidence, CRP-ABAR. "I've observed teachers and parents speaking to the concept. . . . What I have not seen is any formal sustained clear program practice."	Code: Dismantling systemic racism "Part of her poetry curriculum, there was clearly kind of an antibias component to the various subjects or the various poets they were describing." Code: Dismantling systemic racism "They learn about Rosa	Code: Dismantling systemic racism. "To me it means my children are much more critical participants in their community now, as well as in the future. That they can perceive and resist the pervasive the individual as well as institutionalized instances of racism, classism." Dismantling White supremacy. "Just . . . seeing time lines that Columbus Day was being rebranded

	Parks, the Underground Railroad, and about Hispanic history . . . scientists from the Hispanic and African American history. People who make a difference. People who stood up for their rights."	as Indigenous Day and that the students were learning about the Europeans sailing over here, but the impact they had on the Indigenous people and the pain and suffering that was wrought rather than it being a celebration of Euro centrism."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

The Black and Latinx parents at New Heights, the Latinx parents at Rapid River, and the Asian parents at all three schools talked about the celebrations of diversity observed in their children's classroom and at school-wide events. Across racial lines at New Heights and Rapid River, parents spoke about dismantling racism-White supremacy through the curriculum, school policies, and the general climate of the school.

Again, Black parents and Latinx parents at Cedar Hill alluded to the ineffective ability of teachers to recognize their own biases. One Latinx parent's observations also reflected a negative school climate with an example of the White mother who persistently accused the Black child of bullying her daughter. This idea that Black males are somehow more dangerous than others is a myth that has been perpetuated because of slavery and continues today. The adultification of Black children is one of the more harmful ways in which educators display explicit bias and contribute to discipline disparities. A White parent cited the lack of evidence of CRP-ABAR despite the school's intentions.

At all three schools, the perceptions of parents were that CRP-ABAR connected to Montessori philosophy through the philosophy and the cultural lessons. In Table 10, parents' responses to Parent Focus Question 3 are summarized.

Table 10

Parent Focus Question 3: How does CRP-ABAR connect-not connect to Montessori?

Parents	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
Blacks	Code: Montessori philosophy. ". . . It does because it's the whole child, you must connect with them on all levels. Consider their culture and make sure that it is not a traumatic experience, but more of a therapeutic experience." Code: Montessori philosophy. "I would think that it would connect if you are truly child-led because the children don't inherently have the biases. But since I haven't observed that much, I'm not sure."	Code: Montessori philosophy. "Montessori, from what I remember reading started her education from an anthropological point of view. . . . I would think that anything that has to do with the diversity of the condition of the human being would be of interest to her." Code: Montessori philosophy. "Sure, so I think it goes back to the whole idea of community because that's the big, that's the basis of Montessori. It's community and everyone's a part of the community. Everyone matters."	Code: Montessori philosophy. "I believe that the philosophy that is taught here allows kids to embrace cultural diversity. . . . I don't know if it's said that this is ABAR work. I think it's incorporated into where it's just natural for the children." Code: Cultural lessons. "It absolutely connects. Montessori includes culture in education, not just something that happens in a book or in the past. It is engaging the world around you, being aware of what people are bringing to the table. Code: Cultural lessons. Well, I think in some ways it doesn't because it's been absent. I think it can, right? So it's been absent in a sense that we've always had a cultural studies (CS), but CS is different than ABAR. So to think about systems of oppression and racism and bias are different than 'oh look at these different cultures and how they live in the world. . . . There are aspects of Montessori that you can build on to make ABAR, but they aren't inherently there."
Latinx	Code: Adaptation. If you do faithful Montessori, (it) is a very European-centric cultural perspective; . . . however, the way they're implementing it here, there's room for child centeredness . . . ."	Code: Montessori philosophy. I think that it connects to Montessori because of the whole philosophy . . . accepting of everybody, understanding of people, and not totally ignorant to other cultures and other ways people are." Code: Cultural lessons. "I guess culturally in the Montessori lessons, it (CRP-ABAR) can be together."	Code: Montessori philosophy. It connects with Montessori because they don't have a problem with anybody's race. They explain to the kids what's going on in the world and whether you're a different color or not."

Asians	Code: Montessori philosophy. "My interpretation of Montessori is that it was devised to be a system that could encapsulate, hold that in a space in which to give people an ability to interact in a way that is culturally aware."		
Whites	Code: Cultural lessons. "So from what I have learned about Montessori, all about the whole child, letting the child be completely who they are—that includes their culture, their history, their family experience. . . . The idea of Peace Education is central in creating adults that are able to create peace in the world. With that goal, there must be the development of cross-cultural emphasis and understanding." Code: Montessori philosophy. As I understand Montessori, one of the tenets is to provide a child with a truly personalized experience of education, includes understanding of the child and family. I believe this fits right in . . . "	Code: Cultural lessons. "Yes, I think so, . . . there are projects and they are very hands on. . . . Some of them were researching the musical instruments of the Harlem Renaissance." Code: Montessori philosophy. "I think it's very naturally connected to Montessori. For me, Montessori is about kids finding their agency and recognizing that at a very young age and seeing that as a primary aspect of their developmental process."	Code: Montessori philosophy. "I see it absolutely connected to Montessori . . . one essential part of a Montessori education is this sort of self-directed piece and so if children are going to rustle with the world around them, that has to be culturally relevant." Code: Montessori philosophy. "I see it totally connecting. This school to me is about . . . letting the children show us, give us a window into their world and how they learn best, natural tendency. Our natural tendencies without guidance can cause trouble and yet if they are respected with guidance, that's who we can get to because that's who we truly are."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

At all three schools, parents believed CRP-ABAR could connect primarily to Montessori through the tenets of the Montessori philosophy. There were some parents who cited how CRP-ABAR connected through the cultural studies in Montessori. However, one Black parent at Rapid River argued that Montessori cultural studies obfuscated a natural connection with CRP-ABAR because a component of a system of analysis was absent in traditional Montessori cultural studies. That parent and other

parents of color at the three schools believed that although the Montessori lessons did not inherently have an ABAR focus, there existed tenets of Montessori that allowed the teacher to make adaptations to include an ABAR focus. In further discussions with parents at the three schools, it became obvious that they had some clear notions about how CRP-ABAR was impacting their children's learning (see Table 11).

Table 11

Focus Group Question 4: In What Ways Do You See CRP-ABAR Having an Impact on Your Child's Learning?

Parents	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
Blacks	Code: No impact-teacher insensitivity. "It's imperative that young White liberal teachers figure out how to acknowledge their biases and not allow them to interfere in educating every child that comes into their classroom." Code: No impact-teacher insensitivity. "I get e-mails all the time of trivial things that he's doing, that to me feel like it's about the teachers not understanding him. . . . He's a 10-year-old boy that deserves to learn and not need to feel like he's an annoyance to the teacher." Code: No impact-teacher insensitivity "It has a huge impact on my child's learning, if it's used. Then my child can be free to be himself. And doesn't have to feel like he must tamp his personality down to please somebody. Or to please somebody's notion of how he should be."	Code: Recognizing racism-biases. ". . . So, he knows what racism is and I like that they teach him that. They know what it is and they know it's wrong so if he sees it, he's able to say that's racism." Code: How children learn. "Everyone is very passionate about seeing our students succeed . . . the school is willing to look at different avenues to see what can be successful for students . . . to allow some alternative type methods and teaching that can reach students that may have a particular learning style."	Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "The fact that my kid could feel uncomfortable about the way a teacher was treating him and not internalize that and think it was him, but know that it was about the teacher so I think it helps them be better world citizens." Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "I feel like as a Black parent: Our kids automatically have to be. We are always culturally sensitive because of what we experience. I don't know that it affects, I don't know that they see it any different."

Latinx	Code: No impact. "I'm not seeing it. So it may have passed as either a lack of any training or purposeful attempt to really do relevant cultural activities." Code: Cultural awareness and inclusiveness. "I think it could be tremendous. Each Black and Brown kid no matter where they're coming from, their socioeconomic background, (if) they're celebrated and they're shown their gifts and their light and they're able to pursue their interests."	Code: Cultural awareness-inclusiveness. "It definitely makes an impact because, like I said, they learn about all these other cultures and all these other people and they also learn to be more accepting and better humans." Code: Building character-integrity. "It impacts my child, not how to act socially, but how to be in a social setting."	Code: How children learn. "I see a very good impact on my son because he's more eager to learn."
Asians	Code: Cultural awareness and inclusiveness. "I think the cultural awareness and the ability to be empathic with other people and to be able to interact with other people, regardless of what your field of work is in the future. I think is going to be massively important. I think our kids are going to be better for it."	Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "So yes, that Montessori teaching that whole philosophy against racism, against cultural bias, against all of that is taught from the first moment they enter into the premises." Code: "How children learn. It's a good impact because they can either work by themselves or in a group and sometimes the teacher works with them one on one. So they are not left out in the open, lost."	Code: Building character-integrity. "One is that it's fostering their imagination of thinking what this is. Two–I think it's developing a good self-esteem about themselves and to learn more about the subject because they're sort of being exposed to it and they're given opportunities to learn about it." Code: "Building character-integrity. So I picked him up from school that day. We went to Target and bought supplies for the protestors; and drove downtown and gave out water bottles and sun block and snacks to these people. He wanted to do that. I wouldn't have thought to do it myself."
Whites	Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "I think it's going to help my child have the language to . . . navigate the inevitable situation where she is either perpetuating hegemony and oppression and White supremacy herself or being victimized or marginalized as a woman or future woman." Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "Oldest is a sixth grader. . . . Self-aware and empathetic observed in her understanding of her Whiteness and privilege."	Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "I think he understands how racism works and how we need to work to try to eradicate or work through that to have a better understanding for everybody." Code: How children learn. "Seeing herself as an individual, self-defined person really drives her motivation and it's like a ta"il wind. It's like a natural expansion to her person."	Code: Recognizing racism-biases. "She was watching some old turner classic movies . . . and she said, Grandpa, why aren't there any women soldiers . . . we were watching Westside Story . . . and she said, Mom, what they're saying is racist." Code: Building character-integrity. "I think it's an important piece of the puzzle, especially when we're developing character and integrity and going out into the world and how you're going to treat people."

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

The Black parents interviewed at Cedar Hill expressed negative responses and alluded to the teachers' inability to use CRP-ABAR to impact their children's learning in a positive manner. The Black parents at New Heights and Rapid River believed that CRP-ABAR was positively impacting their children's social and emotional learning. Latinx parents at Cedar Hill were skeptical about the impact of CRP-ABAR on their children's learning: Whereas, the Latinx parents at New Heights and Rapid River were more positive about its impact with two of the parents stating it affected their children's motivation and learning. The Asian parents at all three schools believed it was helping their children become better human beings. The White parents at all three schools believed that CRP-ABAR was enriching their children's understanding and ability to navigate in a multicultural environment by having a greater awareness of recognizing racism and biases. Table 12 includes a synopsis of the codes that emerged from the parent focus group questions.

Table 12

Summary of Parents' Focus Group Codes

Focus Group Question	Cedar Hill	New Heights	Rapid River
1. How important is the parent population?	Diversity-enrich school Communication for parents of color	Cross-cultural socialization Parental support	Alignment of values Parental support
2. How have you observed CRP-ABAR in your child's classroom?	Celebrations of diversity Lack of evidence of CRP-ABAR Teacher-adult insensitivity	Celebrations of diversity Dismantling systemic racism-White supremacy	Celebrations of diversity Dismantling systematic racism/ White supremacy
3. How does CRP-ABAR connect or not connect to Montessori?	Montessori philosophy Adaptation Cultural lessons	Montessori philosophy Adaptation Cultural lessons recognizing racism-biases	Montessori Philosophy Adaptation Cultural Lessons
4. In what ways do you see CRP-ABAR having an impact on your child's learning?	No impact-teacher insensitivity Recognizing racism-biases Cultural awareness-inclusiveness	Recognizing racism-biases Cultural Awareness-inclusiveness Building character-integrity How children learn	Recognizing racism-biases Building character-integrity How Children Learn

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

Analysis of the Themes

Major Theme 1. CRP-ABAR was delivered in a variety of ways through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach. Based on the interviews with the three focus groups of administrators, teachers, and parents, it became apparent that Cedar Hill and New Heights approached CRP-ABAR primarily using a curriculum-oriented delivery. Cedar Hill utilized the Changemakers program and New Heights incorporated literature as a part of the curriculum to teach CRP-ABAR. On the other hand, Rapid River used a more systemic approach**.** They

focused on ABAR teacher training and courageous conversations about race and equality. They also added another element by involving the community at large in these activities. However, there were elements of both approaches in all three schools.

At Cedar Hill, a best practice of CRP-ABAR implementation was the ASHOKA Changemakers as the vehicle for their curriculum. A Latinx teacher said, "We're an ASHOKA Changemaker school: That's one of the pillars and so we integrate what it means to be a Changemaker into all of our curriculum throughout." New Heights used literature and book studies school-wide for students, as a best practice, in their curriculum-oriented approach to implementing CRP-ABAR. A White teacher expounded,

> For our school, the CRP-ABAR curriculum is to incorporate a broader look at how we create materials or how we provide instruction to all children, but specifically looking at children of color and making sure that they're represented in all the materials and all the literature throughout the school year. With a variety of extended materials and lessons pertaining to specific books that are selected at the beginning of the school year by each grade group.

Both Cedar Hill and New Heights infused CRP-ABAR into their curriculum.

At Rapid River, a best practice for implementing CRP-ABAR was the use of transformative dialogues, Color Brave, CRP-ABAR training, and community engagement as a systemic approach to teaching CRP-ABAR. A White administrator stated,

> After a few years into being open, getting feedback with parents of color . . . pushed us to take a step back and dig deeper. I decided to engage in some personal reflection and, at the same time, Dr. Greene (one of our Black parents) had enrolled her child in the school. I had sent an e-mail out to the parents and she responded saying, This is who I am. This is the work I do. I do dismantling racism training with people. If you are serious, I would be happy to support your efforts. So, for about a year, we did our own study group as an administrative team. We did our own reading, journaling, discussing, reflection, unpacking our own stuff, and then she helped us create a ministrategic plan around dismantling racism and where to go from there. It was also at that time that we chose the language of ABAR.

The founding stakeholders at Rapid River engaged in a period of self-reflection before creating an intentional ABAR focus.

1b. Subtheme. CRP-ABAR connects to the Montessori philosophy through peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment. Parents and staff at all three schools agreed that CRP-ABAR could and did connect with Montessori through peace-global education and the prepared teacher environment. In Montessori, the prepared environment refers to the physical areas of the classroom that the teacher organizes in preparation for the students to carry out the work for the day. The prepared teacher refers to the teacher who can let go of a personal ego and perceived notions of how children should be while appreciating and recognizing the uniqueness of each individual child. A Black parent at Rapid River said,

> I think it connects because Montessori is designed to enrich a child's thinking, to be able to think and make decisions for themselves and be able to calculate and comprehend not just from a book knowledge but just a life perspective.

A Black teacher at New Heights said,

> I think it's so closely related to Montessori anyway, that freedom of choice. . . . just the freedom of being who you are. My thing is always that children are going to learn. They're going to learn something, but who they are in society is more important. So, I think, giving them those tools and those skills to be good citizens, which I believe Montessori does, is just so closely related with ABAR and CRP.

A White teacher at Rapid River responded,

> Oh, it's everything about Montessori. You know Montessori talks about the prepared environment; the prepared teacher, following the child. You can't have a prepared teacher without this work. The environment needs to be a mirror for the children. They need to be able to look inside the classroom and see themselves. . . . Everybody has different needs. Everybody has different strengths, different weaknesses. We're looking at equity–not equality. This is our classroom. So, it's everything.

The ways that it did connect was through Montessori's peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment.

Major Theme 2. Teachers' perceptions were that CRP-ABAR impacts students of color primarily through social emotional growth with limited academic outcomes. At all three schools**,** teachers reported that CRP-ABAR impacted their

students of color primarily through social and emotional learning. Teachers believed students were more empathetic, exhibited higher self-esteem, increased cultural pride, self-advocacy skills, self-empowerment skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills. In New Heights, a few teachers did suggest CRP-ABAR may have impacted their students of color's learning. A Black teacher at New Heights shared, "I saw that language became very strong in my class. It opened up language for me and for the students. I saw what a difference it made and how strong the scores were, especially the reading scores." A Latinx teacher at New Heights communicated, "I've had students who were not reading as much as they are now. They were looking through books and said, oh look we were reading about this. They made a correlation between the Holocaust and slavery." Only at New Heights did teachers allude to any positive academic outcomes.

2a. Subtheme. Many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking. Despite what appeared to be the best of intentions, many instances of deficit theory thinking were observed while interviewing teachers. As an example, one Latinx teacher at Cedar Hill stated, "I'm not seeing like this light turn on." In other instances, teachers described supporting students in ways that criticized their families. Another White teacher at Cedar Hill contrasted the classroom with the support at home, suggesting,

> This may be the only place where they truly feel unconditional love and support. Sometimes, they go home and it's not like that. Kiddos are going home and they come back to school and they almost start again because they're getting whooped.

Another White teacher at Cedar Hill stated,

> He was with me last year and was with me again this year. Has a history of dyslexia with the family. At this point, he is struggling to write his name with repeated practice . . . seeing a tutor. The only time I could meet with the tutor is at 5:30 today . . . so that's an example of me working with the family.

At New Heights, a White teacher stated, "There was one boy who probably would have done better, but he was being influenced by gun games at home and I was influencing him in the classroom as it was a whole other thing to deal with." A Latinx teacher at New Heights displayed an attitude supporting cultural appropriation when stating,

> I remember we had this discussion about the Halloween costumes and we kind of took it to another level because they were saying that the little girls from Pre-K couldn't wear the Pocahontas. The first thing that came to my mind was, who is wearing costumes are the little kids. But the children don't see that we are hurting anybody's feelings. They don't see that part. They actually see those as a role model, like, oh wow, Pocahontas is my hero.

We also observed other instances. As an example, a White teacher at Rapid River stated, "Creating that climate is really important for those folks." Another teacher said, "They' feel more able to relate to us because they see we are working hard to relate to them."

When questioned about how CRP-ABAR impacted students of color, a White teacher at Rapid River referenced attendance and said,

> The students that fall into our free and reduced, which is pretty typical,

> attendance is near 100%. And, so coming here, it's a safe building. It's food. It's air conditioned in the heat. It's heated in cold weather. So, sometimes, they're physically here due to that difference in socioeconomics because of that factor.

At the time of the study, approximately 42% of the students were on a free or price-reduced lunch program and not all were Black.

Major Theme 3. Some parents believed racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity. At all three schools, many parents believed racism was being dismantled through the curriculum and through celebrations of diversity in classrooms and at school-wide events. One Black parent at Cedar Hill said she observed good reading materials for Blacks and Latinx in her child's classroom, "I've seen good reading material in my children's classrooms that are not just during Black History Month and Latino History Month." An Asian parent at New Heights reported, "I was in cultural shock when I discovered that the students learned about the Hindu religious celebration called Holi. The classroom reenacted the festival with different colored powders and music and included the tabla drum." A Black teacher at Rapid River observed, "I'm noticing, we have cultural awareness months. We sort of follow like the national calendar, like Hispanic Heritage, Indigenous Peoples, First Nations Awareness Month." There were several school-wide cultural activities built into the calendars at all three schools.

On the other hand, despite positive perceptions from parents, none of the schools were immune to incidents of bias. At Cedar Hill, both Black and Latinx parents provided firsthand accounts of what they considered racist or insensitive

treatment of Black students from teachers and staff. One Black parent at Cedar Hill relayed a conversation with her son's teacher who said she was struggling to emotionally relate to her child. The parent's response was, "I'm not sure you realize how offensive it is that you say you cannot bond with my child."

A Black parent at Rapid River believed,

> Despite the ongoing work of the school and its strong commitment to CRP-ABAR, there are still some teachers with underpinning instances of biases. I feel like, specifically the ABAR works. I don't feel like, as a parent, the teachers are openly reflective about their own processes and how ABAR plays out in their work, in their relationship with my children or even in the classroom. We know the work's happening, but my feeling has been more teachers than not have been defensive when we bring up issues of race.

Another Black parent further supported this sentiment when she said,

> I participated in the ABAR training here . . . and it was interesting to have a couple teachers in there who thought they were culturally sensitive, but never understood the privilege. . . . And it was very noticeable in words that she used, like the trio, and the clique of these three Black boys who played together and how she categorized these young men. But there was also another group of their White counterparts whose language she used in a totally different way in that they were expressing themselves.

Despite the efforts to implement CRP-ABAR*,* at all three schools, parents perceived and cited examples of teachers' implicit and explicit biases.

Archival Data

To find out if the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators had an impact on student outcomes, archival data, such as the results of high-stakes performance testing, and suspension and-or behavioral referrals, were examined. Taking a closer look at the data may provide a window into possible relationships and converging lines of inquiry.

Archival Results of Criterion-Based Testing

For this study, the researchers reported 3 years of data in language arts and math for only the criterion-based test conducted in the spring of each school year at all three schools. The data were public information as a part of each school's Accountability Report and were also provided by an administrator at each school. The test results for Language Arts and Mathematics for Cedar Hill for the years 2016 to 2019 are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Cedar Hill Language Arts and Mathematics Test Results for 2016 to 2019

	Blacks	Whites	Asians	Hispanics
Language Arts				
2016-2017				
Above standard	0.0	57.5	43.0	0.0
Below standard	79.7	0.0	0.0	45.8
2017-2018				
Above standard	0.0	50.0	31.6	0.0
Below standard	74.9	0.0	0.0	34.1
2018-2019				
Above standard	0.0	48.4	24.2	0.0
Below standard	90.5	0.0	0.0	48.7
Mathematics				
2016-2017				
Above standard	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Below standard	130.0	0.3	16.7	97.2
2017-2018				
Above standard	0.0	4.4	5.7	0.0
Below standard	116.7	0.0	0.0	59.6
2018-2019				
Above standard	0.0	2.0	16.7	0.0
Below standard	134.6	0.0	0.0	80.4

At Cedar Hill, in Language Arts and Math, for all 3 school years, Blacks and Hispanic (Latinx) students scored significantly below the Whites and the Asian students. The test results in Language Arts and Mathematics at New Heights (see Table 14) confirmed the pattern at Cedar Hill, where Black students are scoring below their peers.

Table 14

New Heights Language Arts and Mathematics Test Results for 2016 to 2019

	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Asians
Language Arts Proficiency				
2016-2017	48.0	73.0	78.0	0.0
2017-2018	50.0	64.0	89.0	70.0
2018-2019	45.0	70.0	85.0	0.0
Mathematics Proficiency				
2016-2017	48.0	58.0	88.0	0.0
2017-2018	35.0	54.0	77.0	80.0
2018-2019	38.0	46.0	60.0	0.0

In Language Arts, the Black students at New Heights scored significantly below the Hispanic (Latinx), White, and Asian students. In Mathematics, the Black and Hispanic (Latinx) students scored below the White and Asian students: The Latinx students fared better than the Black students. At Rapid River, this trend continued (see Table 15).

Scores for 2018-2019, at Rapid River were not aggregated for Black students. For all 3 years, in Language Arts and Mathematics, Black students scored lower than all other groups. The other groups included the at-risk group, which included Blacks, Hispanics, English language learners, students with individualized educational plans, and low-socioeconomic students.

Table 15

Rapid River Language Arts and Mathematics Percent Proficient for 2016 to 2019

	Everyone	At-risk Group*	Blacks**
Language Arts Percent Proficiency			
2016-2017	75.0	66.0	53.0
2017-2018	59.0	43.0	32.0
2018-2019	61.0	50.0	0.0
Mathematics Percent Proficiency			
2016-2017	45.0	27.0	22.0
2017-2018	42.0	25.0	18.0
2018-2019	48.0	36.0	0.0

*Data aggregated for Blacks by the school.
**At-risk group includes Blacks, Hispanics, English language learners, students with individualized educational plans, and low-socioeconomic students.

Archival Results of Suspension and Behavioral Referrals

Although overall, each school had low levels of suspension, the referral rates for student code of conduct infractions were much higher. The researchers were provided 3 years of archival data on suspension rates and behavioral referrals from the three schools even though each school reported that data differently. The data in different formats were for each school based on the data given from the administrators and, in some instances, from the schools' Accountability Reports. There were no behavioral referrals available for Cedar Hill, which does not mean there were no behavioral issues as were observed by the writers of the field notes (see Appendix G).

In 2015-2016, at Cedar Hill, the suspension rate for Blacks was 1.4%, for Hispanic or Latino (Latinx) was 1.2%, and for Whites was 0.9% (see Appendix G). During the 2016-2017 school year, there were no suspensions reported for Cedar Hill (see

Appendix G). The suspension rate for Asians at Cedar Hill in 2017-2018 was 3.8% in comparison for Whites which was 0.7% (see Appendix G).

At New Heights, in the 2015-2016 school year, there was one Black who had an indoor suspension, which means the child was able to come to school but made to do schoolwork in the office apart from classmates. In the following 3 years, 2017 through 2019, there were no suspensions at New Heights, which does not mean that there were no discipline issues. The charts in Appendix H are a record of the behavioral referrals by infractions and number of incidents as reported by race. In 2015-2016, Black students accounted for 35.7% of the behavioral referrals but accounted for less than 22.0% of the school's population**.** The Whites also accounted for 35.7% of the referrals and less than 22.0% of the school's population. Hispanics (Latinx) accounted for 28.5% of the infractions and more than 50% of the school's population.

In 2016-2017, Black students were 17% of the New Heights' population and were 42% of the reported infractions. Hispanics were 59% of the population and were 54% of the infractions. Whites were 20% of the population and had no infractions. In 2017-2018, of 66 reported incidents, Black students were 19% of the student population and 52% of the behavioral referrals. The Whites were 18% of the population and 14% of the referrals. The Hispanics (Latinx) students were 59% of the population and 35% of the referrals. In 2018-2019, of the 52 reported incidents, Black students (20% of the student population) received 46% of the referrals. The Hispanics (59% of the population) received 35% of the referrals. The Whites (15% of the population) received 19% of the referrals (see Appendix H).

At Rapid River, in 2016-2017, there were 24 behavioral referrals. The incidents included disrespect, disruptive behavior, defacing property, inappropriate language-behavior, verbal-physical abuse, and theft. Sixty-three percent of Blacks, 29.0% of Whites and 8.0% of multiracial students committed the offensives. At the time, there were 231 students enrolled at Rapid River. Of those 231 students, 41.0% were Black, 49.0% were White, 5.0% were Latinx, and 4.0% were others. In this instance, 6.0% of the Black students were involved in the incidents of referrals as compared to 3.0% of the White students. In 2016-2017, the Black students at Rapid River were 42.0% of the populaion and made up 63% of the behavioral referrals. The Whites were 49.0% of the population and made up 29.0% of the referrals. There were 32 behavioral referral reports in 2016-2017 of which 63.0% were attributed to Black students. In 2017-2018, at Rapid River, individual Black students were involved in 69.0% of the behavioral referrals. At Rapid River, in 2017-2018, the types of offences that were reported as student infractions can be viewed Appendix I. Black students were attributed to 69.0% of the violations. In 2018-2019 at Rapid River, the Black students made up 40.9% of the population and 90% of the behavioral referrals. Whites comprised 48.6% of the population and none of the referrals. Latinx students comprised 5.4% of the population and 10.0% of the referrals. At Rapid River in 2018-2019, the kinds of offences that were reported for student infractions are documented in Appendix I. Black students are attributed to 90.0% of the violations.

Triangulation

The interviews of the administrators, teachers, and parents, based on the semistructured questions, were conducted to gain insight into how stakeholders perceived CRP-ABAR operated in three urban Montessori schools. In addition to the analysis of

selected focus group questions that revealed themes and subthemes, the field notes-teacher observations and archival data that included standardized test scores, and suspensions and behavioral referrals were utilized to triangulate the data. In some instances, the stakeholders' perceptions supported the data and in other instances did not.

The CRP-ABAR practices were either curriculum oriented or systemic oriented and were supported by the field notes-teacher observations. The archival data did include support for the teachers' perceptions that CRP-ABAR impacted students of color with limited academic outcomes where the test results showed students of color lagging behind their counterparts. It did not support the premise that students of color benefited primarily through social-emotional growth as the referral results indicated a disproportionate number of Black students being referred for behavioral issues.

Teachers' perceptions were that Montessori can connect through peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment; however, the field notes-teacher observations included indications that there are some best practices and some challenges when it comes to the implementation of CRP-ABAR within a Montessori context. Some parents' perceptions were that some teachers-staff had underpinnings instances of biases and insensitivity and some non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking was supported by the field notes-teacher observations and the disparity in behavioral referrals.

Parents are appreciative of schools staff members' commitment to CRP-ABAR work and some parents' perceptions are that racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity was not supported by the archival data, which revealed that there are still disparities in discipline and academic outcomes for students of

color, especially Blacks, even when the schools understudy have an intentional commitment to CRP-ABAR.

Summary

The researchers conducted a qualitative case study by examining CRP-ABAR in three public Montessori charter schools across the nation located on the West Coast, the Midwest, and the East Coast. The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of the administrators, teachers, and parents of CRP-ABAR and how these practices operated in three urban public Montessori schools whose population of students were 51% or more students of color.

The researchers spent 1 week at each school conducting semi-structured interviews with the three stakeholders–parents, teachers, and administrators. They collected hours of field notes at each site where they each observed morning drop-off, afternoon pickup, both formal and informal classroom observations, and evening parental activities. After the semistructured interviews and field notes were collected, the researchers coded the responses and themes emerged structured around the four overarching questions.

Finally, the researchers examined 3 years of archival data consisting of quantitative data that included standardized test score in language arts and math, suspension rates, and discipline referrals reported by race and ethnicity. The purpose of collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data was to identity whether there was triangulation with the semistructured interviews, the field notes of teacher observations, and archival data to strengthen the validity of the study.

During the thematic analysis of the summary of the responses from the focus questions, the themes identified are listed in Table 16. The subthemes have been noted by numbers with corresponding letters.

Table 16

Themes and Subthemes Identified by Stakeholders' Beliefs and Perceptions on the Impact of CRP-ABAR

Theme-subtheme
1. CRP-ABAR was delivered through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach.
1b. CRP-ABAR connects to Montessori philosophy through peace-global education and the prepared teacher-environment.
2. Teachers' perceptions were that CRP-ABAR impact students of color primarily through social-emotional growth with limited academic outcomes.
2a. Many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking.
3. Some parents believe racism is being dismantling through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity.
3a. Other parents identified some teachers-staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity.

Note. CRP = cultural relative pedagogy, ABAR = antibias-antiracist.

From this research study, information was gained:

1. Even with a multiyear commitment to CRP-ABAR, staff at the three schools varied widely in their implementation. While the schools were consistent in connecting CRP-ABAR to the Montessori practices of peace education, global education, and

preparing the teacher and the environment, the largest variation was whether CRP-ABAR was primarily delivered as part of the classroom curriculum or as part of structural changes to the school or work in the surrounding community.

2. Though teachers hoped to see academic changes from their implementation in CRP-ABAR, they primarily saw results in students' social-emotional growth with limited to no change in academic outcomes. Furthermore, even with CRP-ABAR training at all schools, the perceptions of many non-Black teachers of students of color included deficit theory thinking.

3. While some parents at all three schools were positive about the CRP-ABAR work happening at the schools and believed racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity, other parents identified some teachers-staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity.

In Chapter V, the findings of all the components of the study will be discussed. Chapter V includes the research questions, policies, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of administrators, teachers, and parents on the impact of the CRP-ABAR curriculum in three urban public Montessori schools. CRP empowers students intellectually, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It also implies that the teacher is knowledgeable about and sensitive to the child's culture. ABAR gives students the tools to stand up to prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and, eventually, systemic institutionalized racism. It is important that the ABAR component be linked to CRP to understand the role race and racialized thinking plays in society and in the child's place in society. The researchers' goal was to determine if there was a relationship between stakeholders' perceptions, field notes-observations and archival data. As elementary-trained Montessori teachers and heads of school who identify as women of color, one Black and the other Latinx, and have experience teaching in public Montessori and leading a charter Montessori school, the researchers are familiar with all the levels of Montessori from preschool through eighth grade. They are Montessori trained for elementary, Ages 6 to 12 students, and have taken course work in and supervised three to six primary classrooms.

The discussion of the study first has a focus on an overview of the study and the major themes and findings derived from the focus groups that addressed the four overarching research questions:

1. How does CRP-ABAR curriculum operate in three urban public Montessori

schools? What are some best practices?

2. How do CRP-ABAR curricula in Montessori schools affect parents' perceptions?

3. In urban Montessori schools, utilizing CRP-ABAR curricula, what are the connections between teachers' perceptions and outcomes for their students of color?

4. How does implementing CRP-ABAR in Montessori schools impact behavioral referrals, suspension rates and academic outcomes, such as, proficiency levels for high-stakes testing in reading and mathematics for students of color? What are some of the challenges?

Next, there is discussion of the major findings of the field notes-observations, followed by the major findings of the archival data. Limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and implications for policy and practice are presented. Finally, the conclusions based on the findings are provided.

Overview of Study

The researchers conducted a qualitative case study of three urban, Montessori charter schools located on the West Coast, East Coast, and Midwest of continental United States of America. The three schools were selected by meeting the criteria of having 51% or more students of color, and a commitment of 2 years or greater to CRP-ABAR practices within a Montessori setting. During the first phase of the study, the researchers conducted qualitative semistructured questions to three different semirandom focused groups consisting of administrators, teachers, and parents. Intentional diversity was designed to have representation in all focus groups consisting of stakeholders who

identified as Black, Latinx, Asian and White. The 75 interviews were recorded and each lasted anywhere from 20 to 80 minutes.

Both researchers conducted all the interviews at two sites. For the third site (their school) an outside consultant conducted interviews to encourage candor of respondents except for four parents and two administrators who had to be interviewed by the researchers. The interviews were later transcribed and reviewed by each researcher for accuracy with both recorded and written versions.

The first phase of the study also included weeklong on-site observations where each researcher gathered field notes ranging from informal observations on each campus covering drop-offs, pickups, office visits, cafeteria, classroom visits–both random and preselected, and evening parental activities, spending between 7 and 10 hours at each site per day. There was also an administrator's questionnaire (see Appendix J) e-mailed upon returning from the weeklong visits, sent to one administrator at each site. The purpose of this was to gather any potential gaps of information missing to better understand the unique structures at each school. One of the researchers answered the questionnaire at their site.

The secondary phase of the study consisted of a collection of archival data that included 3 years' worth of high-stakes testing state scores in English-Language Arts and Mathematics, discipline referrals, and suspension reports. The archival data were initially provided by an administrator at each site and was later verified by each state's Accountability Report for each school understudy. The data from the semistructured interviews of the three focus groups included three major themes. Subthemes were derived after a closer examination of selected focus group questions amongst teachers

and parents through a cross-racial analysis. This was combined with the field notes and archival data to examine if there were any triangulation amongst the primary sources.

Major Findings of Focus Groups' Overarching Questions

The overarching research questions were the vehicles used to drive this study. During the thematic analysis of the summary of the responses from the focus questions, three major themes-findings emerged about the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the impact of CRP-ABAR in a Montessori setting.

Finding 1. While the schools were consistent in connecting CRP-ABAR to the Montessori practices of peace education, global education and preparing the teacher and the environment, through best practices, the largest variation was whether CRP-ABAR was primarily delivered as part of the classroom curriculum or as part of structural changes to the school or work in the surrounding community. The interpretation of what CRP-ABAR meant varied somewhat among the three schools. Underlining the concept of CRP, according to Ladson-Billings (2014), is ensuring academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness.

At Cedar Hill, the teachers reported the Ashoka Changemakers as a way to focus on CRP-ABAR. At New Heights, the focus on CRP-ABAR was through literature: At the time of the study, it was African American literature. At Rapid River, the focus was on a transformative approach to breaking down biases, first individually, and then within the community, to meet the needs of the students. On the one hand, the school staff were able to show evidence of where they were trying to be inclusive of all cultures; however, at Cedar Hill and New Heights, there were minimal evidence or instances where any critical or sociopolitical analyses were observed. During observations of teacher lessons, the

ABAR lens used to examine the subject matter was often missing. Questions (e.g., how does this impact your lives today; what are the consequence; who is this benefitting?) were absent from the class discussions.

Rapid River, on the other hand, was much more apt to use an ABAR lens, but did not appear to have a curriculum that would provide a standardized way to deliver it. When teaching, it is important that subject matter be presented with a specific critical analysis of how race and power function in society (Nganga, 2015). As an example, when studying historical events, the students at Rapid River were asked to examine the materials inquiring who is the oppressor, who is the oppressed, and who is benefiting from the power structure? Another perception at Rapid River was that ABAR was infused within the school policies and the community at large through their monthly courageous conversations.

Throughout observations, it was observed that CRP-ABAR connects to Montessori through peace education, global education, and the prepared teacher-environment. Parents at all three schools reported that Montessori connected with CRP-ABAR by sending a strong message for inclusion and meant recognizing and accepting differences, building equity, celebrating diversity, being culturally aware, and learning the ‘why’ of racism. Parents also believed it meant respect for all, embracing all cultures, self-exploration, talking openly about race and viewing the world from the perspective of marginalized people. At all three schools, the administrators believed CRP-ABAR was part of their mission and vision and that it was intended to address the inequities in education for students of color.

At Cedar Hill, all stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, and parents) were open and transparent about their struggles and recognized their challenges when it came to the implementation of CRP-ABAR. The administrators supported CRP-ABAR by creating opportunities for professional development, modeling other schools that are distinguished for their CRP-ABAR work, implementing affinity groups for parents, and providing an inclusion model for Exceptional Student Education.

At New Heights, according to the administrators, one of the best practices about bringing CRP-ABAR into the school as a means to close the opportunity gap for African American students was giving the teachers the freedom to choose the literature and develop the curriculum within their grade groups. The administrators ensured there were resources available to purchase Montessori materials and books and to provide ongoing professional development and training in CRP-ABAR. In evaluating teachers, the administrators added a competency that included both CRP-ABAR in instructional practices, the curriculum and in the classroom-prepared environment. They tried to ensure all racial groups were included in leadership roles in school and parent committees.

At Rapid River, the administrators were committed to creating a staff position that specifically supports ABAR to ensure accountability for this work. They allowed and supported children's ideas, through diverse administrators, faculty staff, and the board, to implement ABAR activities in both the classrooms and the community. Other best practices included providing dinner and free child care to allow parents and other community members to attend monthly discussions on ABAR.

Finding 2. Though teachers hoped to see academic changes from their implementation of CRP-ABAR, they primarily saw results in students' social-emotional growth with limited to no change in academic outcomes. Furthermore, even with CRP-ABAR training at all schools, some non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking. The premise for infusing CRP-ABAR in all three Montessori urban public schools was based on an expectation that the implementation of CRP-ABAR would somehow yield connections with favorable outcomes for students of color. While the teachers professed to see a myriad of social and emotional benefits of implementing CRP-ABAR within their classrooms, very few commented on observing any positive academic outcomes for students of color. The administrators at all three schools also echoed this sentiment.

At Cedar Hill, the perceptions of many of the teachers towards CRP and ABAR outcomes for students of color consisted of positive comments. Examples given included building community and empathy, and students of color feel more successful because we are addressing valid issues. Self-esteem resulting from learning about people like them who have made an impact on society was also mentioned.

At New Heights, across racial lines, the teachers thought the benefits of CRP-ABAR were increased critical thinking skills, children were becoming more culturally aware, accepting, and respectful of one another. The children had increased empathy and they felt safer at school and on the playground. They also thought that the children had made greater connections with what was learned at school and parents were reinforcing it at home.

At Rapid River, teachers thought the benefits of CRP-ABAR included exposure at a young age, treating each other with respect, connecting, community building, and courageous conversations. "It is a design that disrupts White supremacy and children of color will feel good about themselves," according to a Latinx teacher. It made one of the White teachers think and gave him the tools to deal with members of his family who thought differently.

The teachers' perceptions were that CRP-ABAR impacted students of color positively through social and emotional growth; however, the behavioral referral data displayed a disparity between the disciplines of Black and White children. Adultification, where Black children are viewed as older and less innocent than their White peers, is a contributing factor of the CRT that may add to the disparity. Some non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking**,** which may in part help explain the discipline disparities discovered in the study.

Although, the parents and teachers at two of the schools (i.e., Rapid River and New Heights) were very positive about CRP-ABAR and there were no overt discrepancies in how children were treated; it was observed by the researchers that in open discussions within the classrooms, African American children were called on less often than others, regardless of the race of the teacher. One microaggression was observed at New Heights when a Latinx teacher brought a group of Latinx and Black girls who were having some adolescent social conflicts to the office. When it was brought to the teacher's attention that one of the Latinx girls had rolled her eyes at the teacher, the teacher dismissed it as "That's just who she is–she didn't mean anything by it." Whereas, that same teacher just days before had commented about an African American girl being

disrespectful because she had rolled her eyes at another teacher. When the inconsistences were brought to the attention of the teacher, she seemed a little surprised that she had done that. She said she was sorry and would try in the future to be more conscientious of personal biases.

Despite the varied perceptions of parents and administrators at all three schools, teachers expressed a sentiment that at times aligned with both parents and administrators and, in other instances, provided a unique perspective. The gravity of the teacher's role is that she has the monumental task of being the primary conduit of the curriculum while meeting the social and emotional needs of the child. Abington-Pitre (2015) contended the people who have contact with the children must be made aware of how their cultural perspectives and prior learning affect their teaching and, as a result, affect our children and their learning outcomes. Some of the teachers in the interviews did not make the possible connections with how they perceived their students of color and their academic outcomes. They talked about how Montessori needed to align itself more with ABAR. They acknowledged systemic racism and White supremacy existed. According to McCormick Rambusch (2013),

> any teacher who enters a class of student brings not only the sum of that teacher and her personal attitudes: She brings conscious ideas about what ought to be placed the environment in order that certain reaction be assured in the children with whom she is working. (p. 67)

Transformation is an individualized journey. However, some teachers never took personal responsibility in how each needed to address personal bias and individual transformation.

One Black teacher however did give an example of how she as a teacher had undergone a form of transformation in at least one area. The teacher recognized that in the past when the Black students would come to the teacher with things that were said to them that were inappropriate or sometimes even racially motivated, the teacher would often tell them to just ignore the comments from the other child. This kind of thinking implied that being Black meant putting up with inappropriate comments and your feelings were dismissed. The teacher realized, after being immersed in the CRP-ABAR work, that this type of response was a disservice to the child and to the teacher, and the teacher began to listen to the students and encourage self-empowerment.

The CRT often uses storytelling to illustrate a deeper truth of why Black children often have difficulty in school: As an example, when a teacher was asked how that teacher observed CRP-ABAR in the classroom, that teacher told the story of two children–one White and the other Black. The story of the White child goes like this:

> One student was struggling with having a safe body. We came up with a behavioral plan –three goals. I suggested he get a star every time he meets a goal. I suggested he gets star every time he gets to one-half hour. The administrator suggested, We want him to be successful, so how about every 20 minutes? Well, I made him an office, his own schedule, giving him some practical life activities that are more settling for him. He has a beanbag. He has the sound cancelling earphones. I asked his parents, can he come directly to my classroom instead of going to the yard because he seems to get overly excited, then hard to come down.

The researcher stated, “I’m assuming this is a child of color.” The teacher replied,

> Actually, this isn't a child of color, but I can give you another example of a student of color. He is having some challenges around safe body. He was with me last year and again this year. Has a history of dyslexia with the family. He is struggling to write his name, seeing a tutor. The only time I could meet with the tutor is at 5:30 today. So that's an example of me working with the family. He loves lizards so we are doing a counting book. Printed out some Google images. You get to cut them and paste them. He wanted a friend to help him. The friend accidently cut into a lizard and he was upset and said he didn't like lizards anymore.

Leonardo (2013) maintained that the narrative that has been weaved around the lives of Black students, such as the culture of poverty, deficit thinking, and the general educability of students from the global majority have consequences that are now social facts. When the teacher told the story of the White child, the teacher went to great lengths to help the child succeed. The teacher set goals. The administrator gave input. They wanted to ensure the White child was successful. They ensured he had an abundance of materials to use. The teacher ensured the child was given lessons that were conducive to helping him. The teacher communicated with the boy's parents and was even willing to give him extra time by inviting the boy into the classroom before the official start of school. Whereas, for the Black child, the teacher stated the child was having challenges around a safe body and that there was a history of dyslexia, but never gave any information on how the teacher was addressing them. The teacher focused on specific strategies to address a specific problem with the White child. There was no such specific targeting of the Black child's problem. Instead, the teacher talked about the boy's

struggle to write his name and how the teacher had printed some lizards for the boy to cut and paste to do a counting book. The Black child did have a tutor; however, the only time the teacher could meet with the tutor was at 5:30 that afternoon and that was an example of how that teacher was working with the family. It should be noted that this is the same teacher who was observed by the researchers with both children as an example of a teacher who was having challenges implementing CRP-ABAR within a Montessori classroom.

Finding 3. While some parents at all three schools were positive about the CRP-ABAR work happening at the schools and believed racism is being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity, other parents identified some teachers and staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity. Generally, the parents at all three schools, when asked how they saw CRP-ABAR having an impact on their relationship with teachers and staff, used words like appreciative and favorably impressed. The Asians at all three schools believed their children were acquiring the ability to become more empathic to people of different backgrounds. The White parents believed their children were learning to recognize their White privilege, to navigate in a multicultural environment, and to fight oppression. The Latinx parents said their children were learning how to be nonjudgmental and how to recognize racism or bigotry. The Black parents believed CRP-ABAR impacted their children by helping them recognize bias and teaching them to self-advocate. At New Heights, the Black parents also believed it created community, inclusion, empathy, and a greater acceptance of all people. At Rapid River, the sentiment amongst Black parents was that it enhanced critical thinking skills and allowed for open conversations about racism.

Parents across racial lines gave the appearance that they were appreciative of the efforts of the schools to implement CRP-ABAR, even when the efforts fell short of actualization. The perceptions of the parents were that the school staff were dismantling racism and bias through cultural celebrations. They mentioned the different celebrations built into the yearly calendars and parents of all backgrounds talked about the school-wide events. According to Ladson Billings (2014), one of the underlaying concepts of cultural relevancy pedagogy is cultural competency, which is the ability to help students appreciate their cultures of origins while gaining knowledge and fluency in at least one other culture. The celebrations of diverse cultures at the schools were an attempt to help students develop a healthy appreciation for themselves and for others.

Even as parents had positive perceptions of the CRP-ABAR work of the school, other parents identified some teachers and staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity. At Cedar Hill, when prompted about how CRP-ABAR impacted on how they believed about the school, Black and Latinx parents interviewed said they were unaware of its implementation. One Latinx parent was concerned that there were disconnects between ABAR and parents' biases toward Black teachers.

Most of the Black parents interviewed at Cedar Hill could not communicate any positive impact that CRP-ABAR was having on their children's learning. They believed CRP-ABAR was lacking in their children's classrooms. They also believed that their children's identities were not respected and that petty negative behaviors were being reinforced because, as one parent put it, "The teacher is unable to recognize her own biases and connect with the child." The teacher transformation that Montessori speaks about must include culturally responsive methods for teachers to meet the demands of a

diverse student in Montessori schools (McCormick Rambusch, 2013). The Latinx parents at Cedar Hill reported that they were not seeing it (CRP-ABAR) implemented. One parent stated, “It does not exist. . . . Too many families of color have left and Whites are taking over.” Even the White parents realized that Cedar Hill struggled with the implementation of CRP-ABAR. A White parent confirmed, “The rhetoric matches my views, but there is work to be done.” Another White parent admitted, “The school has not lived up to the potential and the promise of the founders’ vision.” Debs (2016b) suggested that there is a need for a commitment of Montessori schools and the Montessori community at large to provide meaningful training in ABAR practices, including recruitment of teachers of color and administrators within both the public and private Montessori sector.

The overall climate at Cedar Hill was not favorable and stood out amongst the three schools understudy and supported the finding that there was an underlying pinning of bias. There were several possible contributing factors. The attrition rate for school leaders was high with the school going on its third principal in 3 years. During the year, the study was conducted, a White woman who formally served on their Board of Directors was hired. The woman seemed to be figuring out how to bring a community together that appeared quite divided. Another dilemma was the fact that there were two campuses, already adding a physical distancing and disenfranchised energy to the existing disunity at the school. Aggregated to the complexities of the school were sociopolitical realities. Cedar Hill was situated in a community that was historically African American and many of the original members of the community were pushed out through gentrification. This created resentment and reaffirmed the power structure of

Whites, both in the school and the community at large, perpetuating systemic White supremacy. Adjoined to this incursion and injustice was the general disregard of Black children, particularly boys and their families. Many Black and Brown families expressed frustration culminating from their firsthand accounts of how their children were being treated; their concerns not being addressed; and their pleas being ignored, dismissed, or invalidated.

At New Heights, even though there were parents who did not speak openly about underpinning instances of racism or biases, this could be attributed to at least three factors:

1. During the interviews, there were a few Latinx and White parents who were not familiar with the terms CRP-ABAR.

2. The overwhelming majority of the head teachers at New Heights were trained from a Montessori Accredited Teacher Education program, unlike the other two schools. Generally, at Cedar Hill, there were two teachers in each class. One was state credentialed and the other was either Montessori trained or in training. There were few head teachers with both the state and Montessori credentials. Even at Rapid River, many of the teachers beyond preschool were not Montessori trained. The Montessori philosophy professes a deep reverence for the child. Although this may not always happen, fundamental foundations of Montessori teacher training provide a framework for how teachers should speak to and treat children and may reduce the appearance of biases when working with children.

3. During the interviews, when asked about how they believed about CRP-ABAR being a school-wide focus, there were a couple of parents who were either indifferent or ambiguous toward the practice.

In contrast, at Rapid River, parents were more knowledgeable about the school's focus on CRP-ABAR and there were a couple of parents who were able to identify underpinning instances of biases. This could be attributed to an even greater awareness of CRP-ABAR. Even a White parent believed that a White supremacist attitude was still prevalent among some parents.

Major Findings of Field Notes of Teacher Observations

Implementing CRP-ABAR is a major undertaking for any school. It is an undertaking that demands more than just good intentions. It requires hard work. It requires the commitment of administrators, staff, and parents to reach any level of success. These three schools are to be commended for the work they have committed to doing. Through two weeklong site visits, the finding that CRP-ABAR was delivered through a curriculum-oriented approach or a systemic-oriented approach was supported by the researchers' field notes and observations**.** However, there were elements of both approaches in all three schools. The impact of implementing CRP-ABAR could have possibly been more effective if the schools had focused equally on both approaches. The amount and type of training the teachers and staff received was reflected in the terminology used when discussing CRP-ABAR. Terms, such as White supremacy, White privilege, the master's narrative, and colonialism, were common among both staff and parents at Rapid River. They had the vocabulary to talk about ABAR practices. This does not mean that the vocabulary was lacking at the other two schools or that there were not

instances of bias at Rapid River: It only signaled that the training had more vocabulary built in to give participants the language to talk about it. The administrators at all three schools were committed to the Montessori philosophy and making CRP-ABAR a priority in educating their students. A common struggle that all the administrators faced was finding teachers with the necessary Montessori credentials.

Based on their 28 years of public Montessori experience, the researchers contended that at Cedar Hill, there was a general lack of continuity in Montessori curriculum and a lack of CRP-ABAR prevalent in many of the classrooms even within the divisions. Some of these differences could be attributed to the experience of the teacher, efficacy of Montessori training, and time of the year visited (it was the first 2 weeks of school). However, there was at least one Montessori-trained teacher or in training in each class throughout the school. Cedar Hill staff claimed to be an Ashoka Changemaker school. There were definite elements of CRP-ABAR in the curriculum: As an example, the Changemakers researched and discussed were leaders who were people of color who made an impact in their field through social justice. There were cultural celebrations of diversity, such as the Chinese parents who came in and organized a celebration on the Chinese New Year. However, there was limited focus on ABAR practices observed in the classrooms and around the school, even though the entire staff had recently completed an intensive ABAR training.

Similar to Cedar Hill, at New Heights, there was a prevalent curriculum-oriented approach in the delivery of CRP-ABAR throughout the school. This was evident through the school-wide literature focus disseminated in all divisions and throughout the schools' annual assemblies. At the time the study began, New Heights was focusing on African

American literature. The time line included slavery to the Civil War. The following year the focus was 20th Century African Americans with an emphasis on the Harlem Renaissance. Not only was fidelity of CRP-ABAR supported by classroom observations and lesson plans, but also with materials made and put on the shelf to compliment the literature lessons completed in the classrooms. Furthermore, the special area teachers in Art and Music also planned their lessons around the literature focus of the school.

Like Cedar Hill, what was also lacking at New Heights was more of a systemic-oriented approach. The ABAR nomenclature, such as oppressor, oppressed, White privilege, and colonizer, was missing from most of the lessons observed at New Heights. Terms, such as equality, prejudice, slavery, and human and civil rights were used during the literature lessons across the curriculum. Absent from the school's culture were the ABAR vocabulary and concepts used in dismantling and disrupting systems of oppression, rooted in a historical context of White supremacy. The school in the past had tried to bring the issue of antiracist practices to the forefront through workshops and teacher training and had received strong resistance from the teachers. There was a great deal of White fragility under the guise of 'This is not Montessori' and 'I don't see color.'

To support New Heights in their CRP-ABAR work, Clark, an expert Montessori trainer, who specialized in infusing Montessori philosophy with CRP-ABAR was brought to the school to provide extensive professional development and elicit buy-in from the teachers. The idea was to bridge Montessori philosophy with the greater idea of liberatory education. The administrators asked if she could start with the transformation of the teacher from a Montessori perspective and then move to the principles of CRP-ABAR embedded in liberatory education. Liberatory education, as conceived by Friere (1970), is

the posing of a problem in relation to the world where the student and teacher learn from one another. Clark worked with the school for 3 consecutive years, slowly intensifying the ABAR work as the school staff appeared to evolve in their understanding and buy-in. The administrators of the school intentionally chose Clark because past attempts of bringing in experts to talk about academic gaps between Blacks and other students were dismissed because the presenter was not Montessori trained. Another excuse for not implementing CRP-ABAR was the excessive paperwork required of teachers.

Teachers often complained at New Heights that they had no time to do anything extra because of the excessive paperwork demanded by the district and the school. Initially, teachers were viewing CRP-ABAR as something extra rather than a part of the Montessori curriculum. There was a great degree of variation in the fidelity of Montessori and CRP-ABAR, including the quality of its implementation from class to class. However, CRP-ABAR and Montessori were consistently evident throughout the building and in recordkeeping. Initially, approximately 15 years ago, there was strong opposition to implementing elements of CRP-ABAR from the teachers. Alleviating the burden of excessive paperwork, while focusing on the implementation of Montessori and CRP-ABAR with fidelity, and ongoing professional development may have attributed to greater buy-in from teachers throughout the years.

The school's longevity and undergoing Montessori accreditation may have contributed to the limited evidence of CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting. According to Yin (2016), "researchers' values, expectations, perspectives are implicitly contained in any research protocol" (p. 106). There is also no escape from the cultural bias of both researchers who identify as women of color–one African American, the other

Latinx–and the implications this may have on the perceptions of the stakeholders at their school site, as well as the validity of their responses.

At Rapid River, unlike at the other two schools, CRP-APAR was delivered in an approach that was more systemic oriented. The emphasis appeared to be multifaceted. Evidence of ABAR was found in training for teachers and affinity groups organized by race or ethnicity for parents to discuss issues of concern to their particular groups. There was also ongoing community engagement involving diverse representation of the community where monthly topics pertaining to ABAR, labeled *courageous conversations* about race and systemic issues, such as gentrification, were discussed. Their board had explicit policies ensuring a staff position that provided support to teachers, in addition to the ongoing ABAR training provided to staff, parents, board members, and all other entities with which they did business.

While the school had made substantive structural efforts to infuse CRP-ABAR throughout the school, no obvious sustained or standard curriculum-oriented way of delivering CRP-ABAR was apparent. One of the teachers at Rapid River went so far as to suggest, "My biggest challenge is time for lesson development. But I also think there needs to be an ABAR curriculum in the classroom." The few CRP-ABAR lessons that were observed appeared to be teacher made and did not connect to an identifiable curriculum (e.g., a particular program or unified way of teaching it).

It was apparent to the researchers that the school administrators struggled with retaining Montessori trained teachers, although in conversations with all administrators, they expressed high regard for Montessori and valued the pedagogy. The researchers also saw no evidence of a specific Montessori record keeping, except in the three preschool

classrooms and in one of the six-to-nine classrooms. There was not a Montessori scope and sequence that was evident throughout the building. There was a consistent ABAR focus throughout the school, and elements of CRP as the classroom teachers observed were thematically presenting on Latinx heritage. This was also evidenced through the bulletin board displays and books in their classroom libraries. No obvious or consistent method of delivering the instruction was apparent. The teachers appeared to either make their lessons or research different avenues, such as Teaching Tolerance, for ideas and lesson plans to teach the information. The researchers were aware that there were some classroom teachers who were in the process of getting trained and one of the nine-to-12 teachers was trained, but the researchers never saw her in her classroom. Instead, they observed her in a group lesson on Latinx heritage in the open space. In the schools Strategic Planning Report, a survey was given to some parents who also mentioned the school had difficulty in retaining Montessori trained teachers and that the school was more of an ABAR-focused program than a Montessori one. The overall impression was that the school appeared to prioritize the ABAR work done both in the classroom and in the community over Montessori. As this finding suggests and will be discussed later, maintaining a structural focus on antiracism and high-fidelity Montessori are often competing challenges and both are hard to do well.

The added commitment of CRP-ABAR, and how each school reckoned with infusing this within a Montessori curriculum, while meeting state standards as evidenced in high-stakes testing, is an obvious hurdle these schools all face. The researchers hoped that by gaining insight as to how each school uniquely dealt with this obstacle, in addition to identifying mechanisms, if any, that help sustain a CRP-ABAR focus, they might

clarify some of the unique challenges that teachers face from a systemic, administrative perspective.

Archival Data Findings

Going back to the second finding, though teachers hoped to see academic changes from the implementation of CRP-ABAR, they primarily saw results in students' social emotional growth. Furthermore, even with CRP-ABAR training at all schools, many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking. In all three schools, CRP-ABAR was introduced as a possible pathway to improved student outcomes, but it was found that even after implementing CRP-ABAR, schools were still struggling with opportunity gaps in testing outcomes and racially disproportionate disciplining.

At all three schools, the archival data, which included behavioral referrals and suspensions, and the results of high-stakes testing overwhelmingly did not reflect positive outcomes for Black students. Teachers' perceptions were that CRP-ABAR impact students of color with limited academic outcomes and the dismal test scores reflected that phenomena. There remains a monumental gap between the academic achievement on standardized testing at all three schools of Blacks and Whites, a lesser gap between Latinx and Whites, which is all still consistent with national trends (Nation's Report Card, 2015).

The CRT used as a theoretical framework for this study was evident in all aspects of the study, including the archival data. The CRT purports the educational system is supported by a narrative and policies; organized in such a way as to disadvantage the Black child from advancing in all areas (Leonardo, 2013). The narrative implies and

sometimes even states that the Black child is lacking in academic acumen; therefore, some teachers' expectations coupled with the efforts and resilience needed to reach the child are negligible at best. This narrative is steeped in anti-Blackness so that the Black child is perceived to have deficits in social skills; therefore, what might be considered normal or acceptable behavior with a White child might be viewed as abrasive or disrespectful in a Black child, thereby inviting a behavioral referral.

The suspension and referral rates highlight the disparities that Black students continue to endure at Montessori schools (Brown & Steele, 2015) despite the favorable perceptions from, administrators, teachers, and parents at Rapid River and New Heights**.** The perceptions of parents, administrators, and teachers at Cedar Hill were more congruent with the triangulation of the referral-suspension data.

In analyzing the archival data that included discipline referrals at New Heights and Rapid River, Black students accounted for most of the infractions that were coded disruptive behavior and disrespect. Contributing to this disparity in referral rates may once again in part be attributed to deficit thinking (Riessman, 1962). Riessman's (1962) book, *The Culturally Deprived Child*, supported the premise that White middle-class cultural expression was the norm or correct way of behaving in school has added to these phenomena. In the past 60 years, little has changed in the perceptions of some educators when it comes to contributing to this oppressive pedagogy of education (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Tushnet, 2016).

At Cedar Hill, the Black and Brown parents were concerned with disparities in how the Black children were disciplined, and the researchers observed what appeared to be more incidents of Black males being disciplined or reprimanded than other races

during their weeklong observation. The triangulation did, on the surface, convey disparities in suspension rates for Black and Brown children. Students with disabilities had the highest rates of suspension, but there was no data on their races. Discipline referrals might have helped the researchers understand what behaviors led to the suspensions.

At New Heights during the years, 2017 through 2019, there were no suspensions, which does not mean that there were no discipline issues. In fact, a deeper analysis reveals statistics reported were incongruent with researchers' initial perceptions at their school of study. They believed that they had eliminated discipline disparities where, during the early years, Black students were sent to the office at a much higher rate than any other students. On the surface, there appeared to be more equity in the discipline of the children.

The teachers appeared to be more aware of how they were interacting with the Black students, which resulted in less Black children being sent to the office upset with the teacher. The infractions that were brought to the administrators' attention were minor for the most part. Although there did not appear to be a disproportionate number of Black children being disciplined, Black children's offenses might have been disproportionately recorded. Whereas some teachers might have felt a conversation with the non-Black children was sufficient to de-escalate the situation. This also reflects back to the CRT that in the narrative, Black children are less deserving; therefore, they are not owed the same consideration as others.

After reflection, the researchers attributed another disconnect to what was perceived and what the statistics said at New Heights to two other possible factors. The

first was that there was a reduction in Black children being sent to the office. The second reason was a nation-wide shift from zero tolerant policies resulting in suspension and school to prison pipeline for Black, Latinx, and Native American students to a more restorative approach. The district in which their school was located was cited for having a disproportion number of Black and Brown children suspended by the Justice Department of the United States. Beginning in 2014, the superintendent of the school board deconstructed the entire student code of conduct and eliminated suspensions. Instead students who would have been suspended were placed at learning centers for a specified amount of time. These students were sent to a location near their home schools with their class work to not break the continuum of their academic learning.

At Rapid River, based on their data, the administrators were aware of discipline disparities between Black females and non-Black students. As a corrective response to this problem, they created a Black Girl Power social group. The focus of the group was to build strong alliances between the girls and to establish systems of support to positively affirm their identities and self -empowerment. Initiatives, such as these, could be attributed to the school's commitment to ABAR by establishing a position whereby the administrator primarily served as the director of equity and ABAR implementation. This person was instrumental in pulling in resources for the staff, building relationships with the community members, and was an anchor to many of the stakeholders in supporting their ABAR journey.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study was the researchers' lens. The researchers' school was included in the study, which made them continuously question their

perspectives, thoughts, and analyses. Yin (2016) reported, “Researchers’ values, expectations, perspectives are implicitly contained in any research protocol” (p. 7). The study lasted 1 week in each of the schools and, therefore, more time in each school could have provided greater insight into their observations and findings. The researchers found the lack of a standardized definition of the terms *CRP-ABAR* made it challenging to analyze data, which led to schools having a variety of interpretations of what these practices meant in their school. Clear definitions widely shared and a tool to measure CRP-ABAR and fidelity of Montessori could have provided more information into the possible connections of all three practices.

All three public schools faced the challenge of standardized testing that oftentimes prevented the schools from delivering instruction from a Montessori curriculum with an alignment of state standards versus the other way around. This dilemma caused an inconsistency in the delivery of Montessori and could have impacted the focus of CRP-ABAR from class to class or within the school. A solid scope and sequence in Montessori were missing from all three schools to different extents. This made it difficult to access to how CRP-ABAR was infused throughout the curriculum. In addition to having CRP-ABAR in their lesson plans at all three schools, only at the researchers’ school was there a requirement in teacher competencies for teacher evaluations to include evidence of CRP-ABAR through observation, in lesson plans, and in the Montessori-prepared environment. Data were reported differently at each school, which made it more difficult to identify trends or possible relationships.

Racial and ethnic identification differed in one of the schools where the ethnicity of Hispanic superseded race of any kind causing students who could have been Black,

Asian, or White who also were Hispanic to be grouped exclusively as Hispanic. Factors that might have influenced the findings were almost unlimited access in one school and a controlled approach in another when observing, while the third was the researchers' school. The CRP-ABAR within a Montessori setting is relatively new so there were no studies to replicate or build on.

Recommendations for Expanding CRP-ABAR

From an institutional perspective, policies on the school level must be written that continue to ensure the schools' commitment to CRP-ABAR both from a macroperspective and a microperspective. Examples of macro initiatives include local school policies, board training, parent training, mission statements, student enrollment, analyzed student data, academic and behavioral outcomes, teacher professional development in CRP-ABAR, community outreach, supporting Black and other businesses from the global majority to a microperspective, such as teacher self-evaluation tools for measuring CRP-ABAR, administrative self-evaluating tools, parent affinity groups, and student feedback and empowerment groups. The researchers uncovered that aside from being an effective Montessori teacher, systems are needed in place to support Black students much like the laws for students with disabilities or who speak a language other than English. These policies would keep the advancement of students of color, particularly Black children at the forefront of every strategic improvement plan. Furthermore, both macroelements and microelements would include both short- and long-term strategic goals for accountability, centering on CRP-ABAR in a Montessori setting.

Additionally, what is needed is preservice training in Montessori that is framed around CRP-ABAR. Montessori training centers must highlight this work as part of their philosophical foundations. Instructors in these training centers should be sufficiently represented from the global majority, as should the preservice Montessori teachers engaged in this training. National Montessori organizations (e.g., AMS, AMI, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector) should provide fellowships for researchers of color wanting to conduct more studies. The Montessori Public Policy Initiative should not only include language about being more inclusive but work towards creating educational policy that would create an equitable Montessori for students of color, with increased funding and recognition for those schools that can demonstrate their Black students and other students of color are succeeding.

Recommendations for Further Research

A CRP-ABAR tool was missing from this study that could communicate to the individual teacher and the school community members at large concrete feedback in terms of the effectiveness of these practices. Missing a CRP-ABAR tool in part might have explained the uneven results of effective CRP-ABAR within each school and how schools fared in comparison to one another. The researchers have created a framework for a CRP-ABAR tool that might guide other educators in evaluating effective practices (see Appendix K). Researchers of color should conduct more studies, such as this one, to continue to explore processes and methods that will keep this work fluid and relevant for children of color to help shape educational policy.

Implications for Policy and Practice

One of the implications of this study is CRP-ABAR as implemented in three urban public Montessori schools do not impact positively academic and behavioral outcomes for Black children; although the perception of teachers, administrators, and some parents is that it increases their social-emotional growth. The high-stakes test scores and behavioral referrals continue to follow the national trends. The implication is teachers' biases could affect how children learn and the race of the child could impact decisions on how issues of behavior are perceived, interpreted, and recorded. Teachers often view Black children as less deserving because of the narrative of poverty, class, and educability associated with them. Racism is such an integral part of our history that racialized thinking and actions are seen as normal. Until racism is eradicated, there will continue to be academic and behavioral disparities.

Another implication is that the tests and educational system in place at this time are utilized to further validate the narrative of what is wrong with the student, rather than what is wrong with the teaching. The criterion tests that are administered simply reveal if the teacher is effective at what the teacher has been paid to do, simply, teach these specific skills. Why is it that teachers can teach those concepts to some children and unable to teach them to others, based on race? It is absurd to connect the ability of a child to the color of the child's skin. Kendi (2019) reported,

> The idea of an achievement gap between the races–with Whites and Asians at the top and Blacks and Latinx at the bottom–creates a racial hierarchy, with its implications that the racial gap in test scores means something is wrong with the

> Black and Latinx test takers and not the tests. From the beginning, the tests, not the people have always been the racial problem. (pp. 101-102)

Color is a social concept and does not determine the educability of the person. Despite the best of intentions, something more intense and dramatic is needed if we are to ensure an equitable education and an unbiased assessment for Black and Latinx children in schools across America, including Montessori schools.

The ongoing work of disrupting personal biases, coupled with support from the school leadership, and the community at large, where commitment to ABAR are synthesized with a CRP curriculum are the essential ingredients needed. However, this alone is not sufficient if ongoing accountability is not included as a way to tangibly measure outcomes. Systemic change is needed to cement school policies and disrupt White supremacist systems if this new order is to thrive.

Another implication is a clear curriculum focus such as literature is needed. Two schools had a curriculum approach. In one of the schools, the focus was clearly defined through literature, where the narratives of marginalized people from the global majority are amplified. Literature allows storytelling to become the powerful conduit of reshaping the past, by examining the present, and constructing the future. Literature is proven to be an effective way to teach both CRP-ABAR and, despite the fact that it was not fully implemented within both models of delivery (curriculum- and systemic-oriented), its possibilities hold great promise as illustrated earlier by the example of the Freedom Schools. The Montessori Great Lessons could also be powerful examples of using storytelling provided the stories include non-European perspectives.

The research unveiled that the best practices of CRP-ABAR contain elements of both curriculum and systemic oriented approaches. In examining how CRP-ABAR works in three different schools, the best practices of each institution revealed the necessity to contain both approaches to create Montessori schools that are, in fact, Liberatory environments. This new social order would celebrate the diversity of its community by unleashing the individual's limitless potential, nurtured in an equitable fashion. Black students would now be seen as individuals deserving of their humanity. This education would include the benefits of social-emotional growth, which the study confirmed, on some levels, and academic success. This could be measured in both traditional ways, such as standardized testing, but must be explored in new ways that also align themselves more accurately with the Montessori curriculum and the child's cultural richness.

If there is not sustained effort by all stakeholders, apathy takes its course and schools are left with no substantive evolution. To sustain this enthusiasm and mitigate complacency, professional development must endure indefinitely. The sowing of each child's potential requires teachers to have ongoing professional development in both CRP and ABAR. These practices need to be built into their daily teaching measured by a tool to evaluate the efficacy of those practices. The CRP-ABAR trainers who are Montessorians or familiar with its pedagogy, such as K. Clark, K. Banks, T. Jewel, B. Hawthorne, A. Allen-Sherman, L. and R. Germans, T. Moquino, D. Han, and others should be contracted by Montessori schools committed to this work.

Montessori companies, such as Clark's Knowthyself, are reimagining Montessori time lines, three-part cards, and all the curriculum domains of Montessori by recreating these materials with the narrative of non-Europeans. The Montessori classroom

environments must mirror these materials if teachers and administrators are going to prepare the Montessori classroom with a CRP-ABAR focus.

The next steps should include a standardization of the terms, *CRP-ABAR*, within a Montessori environment so that schools participating in studies would at least have the basic premise aligned. A research-based tool measuring the efficacy of CRP-ABAR where both curriculum- and systemic-based competencies can be measured succinctly could possibly provide further insight to this research. Using this tool, educators should have the ability to measure the fidelity of Montessori. Montessori is still believed to be a powerful pedagogy that can impact all students in a meaningful way. Those of us who have been in the field for decades have our teaching experiences to know firsthand this program has benefited students. The Montessori *Great Lessons* could also be powerful examples of using storytelling provided the stories include non-European perspectives.

Conclusion

The research showed us that even with a multiyear commitment to CRP-ABAR, the three schools varied widely in their implementation in the following ways:

1. While the schools were consistent in connecting CRP-ABAR to the Montessori practices of peace education, global education, and the prepared teacher and the prepared environment, the largest variation was whether CRP-ABAR was primarily delivered as part of the classroom curriculum or as part of structural changes to the school environment or work in the surrounding community.

2. Though teachers hoped to see academic changes following their implementation in CRP-ABAR, they primarily saw results in students' social-emotional

growth. Furthermore, even with CRP-ABAR training at all schools, many non-Black teachers' perceptions of students of color included deficit theory thinking.

3. Some parents at all three schools were positive about the CRP-ABAR work happening at the schools and believed racism was being dismantled through the curriculum and celebrations of diversity. Even so, some other parents identified some teachers and staff with underpinning instances of biases and insensitivity.

After much deliberation about this process of educational inquiry, the researchers came away with the solemn reality of how difficult it is to dismantle a belief system that has been around since the Europeans first landed on what is now U.S. soil. Tragically betrayed, the Indigenous people lived through invasions over the next hundreds of years that would initiate a new domination built on the blood of massive massacre and genocide. The American forefathers would shape a new culture designed on the exploitation, slaughter, and devaluing of anyone who was not White. The facade of the pioneering spirit of the American Dream was always a *dream deferred* to the countless descendants of great African civilizations. The worldwide slave trade robbed millions of men, women, and children of their humanity and used their lives as a means to acquire an unfathomable wealth, domination, and power. This great evil was contrived by architecting a societal system, based on the dehumanizing of millions of people brought here in the cruelest, most volatile manner imagined. This vile belief system fabricated a lethal White supremacy, penetrating its insidious poison in every possible law and structure deemed valuable and advantageous to the White man. This disease of White supremacy would continue to deem the Black human, a slave–a property for 400 years indefinitely. The so-called progress made from this great experiment of the United States

of America has continued to mask itself with systems designed to violently empower some of its citizens, while entrapping countless others in a state of perpetual survival. The greatest liberties afforded to a democracy would presumably include education. According to the great 19th century educator, Montessori, to educate comes from the Latin word *educare*, which means to unleash from within. If humanity is to survive into the unforeseen future, the ongoing maintenance of educational institutions built on White supremacist structures, must be dismantled and reconstructed. To undo the damage done so extensively to our students of color, centering on Black children, reparations would not even suffice as an equitable exchange or payback. Hence, the ethical responsibility is unquestionable.

Regardless of the good intentions of well-meaning administrators, teachers, and parents, there remains mountains of racism and biases to be conquered before Black students can get the quality education they deserve. These three Montessori schools have made a valiant effort to begin the process of attempting to deconstruct racism in their schools and recognize the structures that are in place that determine who is likely to succeed and who is not. This is a difficult process because teachers, many of whom are White or perceive themselves as White, are resistant to dealing with true self-reflection that might uncover bias or deficit thinking. It is difficult to admit that the underlying causes of Black students not achieving academically and behaviorally may lie, not with the child, but with the teacher's preconceived notions of the child. There needs to be a comprehensive ABAR component in all preservice teacher training programs.

The problem is bigger than what can be corrected at the classroom or even at the school level. It is a systemic problem that calls for massive restructuring of our

educational system at the national level to include a more factual narrative and critical analysis of our shared history. This will not solve the problem, but it might be the beginning of giving not just children of color, but White children as well, a better chance at a more just, equitable, and peaceful society. Although the restructuring of the educational system is needed, even more is needed. It also requires policy changes at both the state and federal level to ensure equitable access to the vast resources (e.g., jobs, housing, education, and opportunities for advancement) for which this country is recognized worldwide.

Although this is needed, even more is required. There needs to be massive uprooting and eradication of racial prejudice and a national cry for justice for each of its citizens. It is time to stop pointing out what is wrong with our Black students and look for the positives. They have strong family support. Black people in the United States would not have been able to survive without the family, which includes the extended family. Black children are resourceful, creative, smart, talented, student leaders, athletic, friendly, articulate, trendsetters loving and want to do well in school. They must be included in advanced courses and not tracked into low or remedial classes by people who are unable to see their potential and unable to understand that they deserve the same effort as others to ensure they are successful. They should not be penalized because teachers have not fulfilled their responsibility to teach. The time has passed when the students and their families can be blamed for not receiving an adequate education.

Fortunately, Montessori educators committed to social justice are not defeated by the atrocities of our American culture nor the contradictions within the Montessori pedagogy that at times can be inherently racist. They are stubbornly committed to the

belief that Montessori education, based on the simple premise of "following the child," the same child with "limitless potential" can be a viable alternative in education if infused with the best practices identified in CRP-ABAR.

How can this premise succeed if the study examining the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators in three public Montessori schools who professed CRP-ABAR falls short of demonstrating any significant outcomes for children of color? The study reinforced several possibilities. First, if one takes the best of the philosophical tenants of Montessori, including the preparation of the environment, and more importantly, the preparation and transformation of the teacher, we can begin to demand a new moral order from teachers that begins with each person's inner human revolution.

The schools that participated in this study were courageous and committed. The process of self-examination can at times be raw and painful, exposing vulnerabilities not always expected. The willingness to even follow through and participate in this study demonstrates not only a seriousness regarding this work, but an acknowledgement of its importance to the Montessori community at large. The researchers are optimistic that the work will continue as the movement for MSJ evolves and more schools become less interested in popular slogans and more invested in making real change for their students of color.

One of the ongoing challenges for public schools is the idea of having a high-quality Montessori while meeting state standards. Now, utilizing both CRP-ABAR has come into the fold and is center for Montessori schools claiming to work for social justice. The idea of having training centers where both Montessori and CRP-ABAR become the foundational competencies acquired for the candidate looking to be a

Montessori teacher is fundamental if this movement of Liberatory, public Montessori schools is to converge. At the time of the study, the country continues to grapple with the over-400-year problem of racism and anti-Blackness stemming from the ideals of White supremacy. Based on the events of the time of this study, the urgency and relevance of this work cannot be overstated.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Flyer

Study Participants Needed for a Case Study

Who: Public Montessori schools that enroll 51% or more students of color and adhere to a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Anti-Bias-Anti-Racist curriculum for at least 2 years with 80% or more of teachers Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) **accredited or in the process of becoming accredited.**

What: Interviews will be conducted at the school sites with three focus groups of parents, teachers, and administrators-school leaders. Researchers will also spend time observing classrooms and other school activities.

Title: *Examination of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Antibias-Antiracist Curriculum in a Montessori Setting*

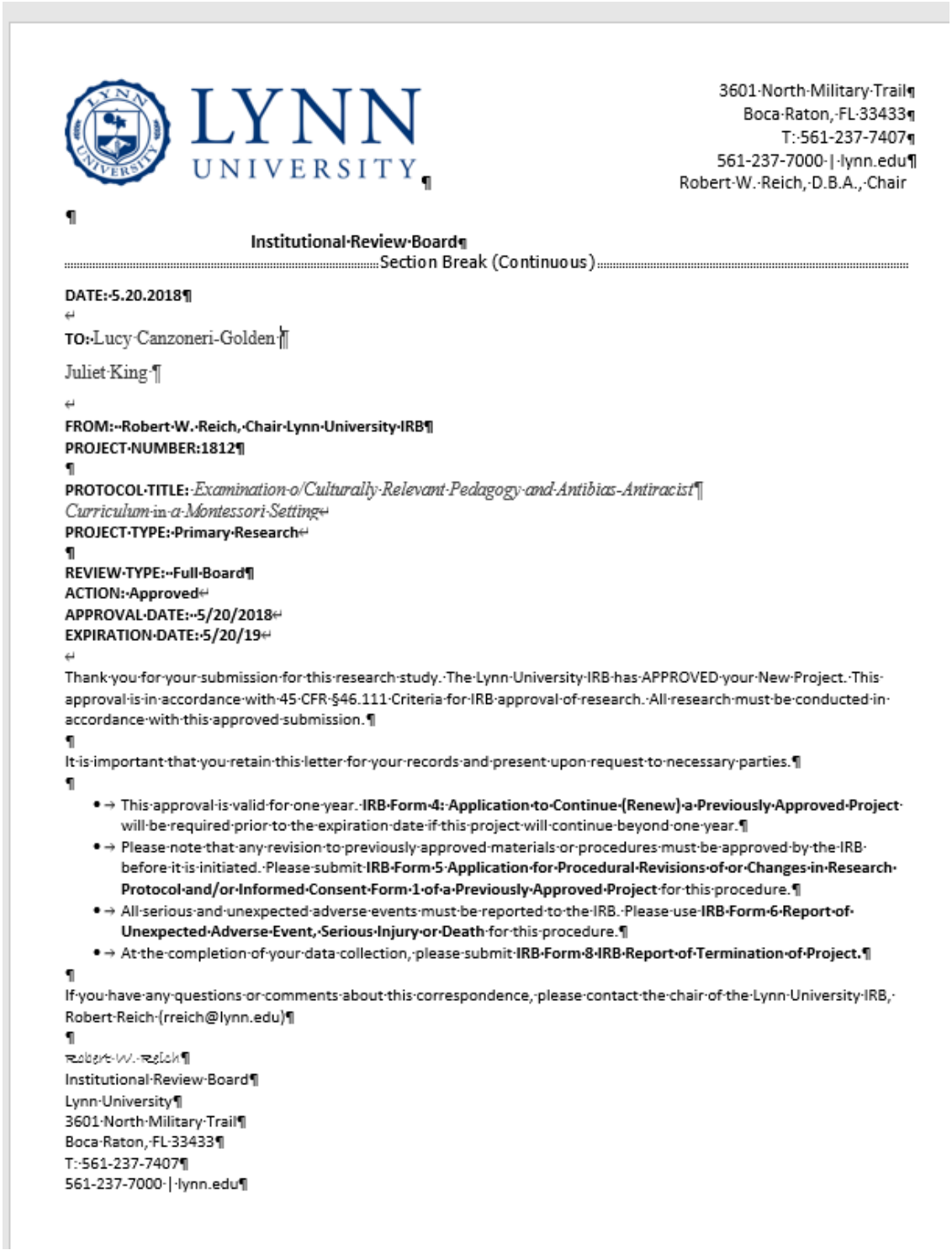
Benefits and Risks: THE INTERVIEWS ARE STRICTLY VOLUNTARY. The schools and the participants in the focus groups will be completely anonymous. Confidentiality will be established by using pseudonyms for participants' names and letter names A, B, and C will be used to protect the identity of the schools.
Risks are minimal, however if a participant feels uncomfortable or stressed the researchers will stop the audiotape interview and immediately destroy the tape. There are no benefits to participating in the focus groups other than participants having the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts in a confidential setting.

Contacts: Lucy Canzoneri-Golden [redacted]

Juliet King [redacted]

APPENDIX B

IRB Approval



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Robert W. Reich, D.B.A., Chair

Institutional Review Board

Section Break (Continuous)

DATE: 5.20.2018

TO: Lucy Canzoneri-Golden

Juliet King

FROM: Robert W. Reich, Chair Lynn University IRB
PROJECT NUMBER: 1812

PROTOCOL TITLE: *Examination of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Antibias-Antiracist Curriculum in a Montessori Setting*
PROJECT TYPE: Primary Research

REVIEW TYPE: Full Board
ACTION: Approved
APPROVAL DATE: 5/20/2018
EXPIRATION DATE: 5/20/19

Thank you for your submission for this research study. The Lynn University IRB has APPROVED your New Project. This approval is in accordance with 45 CFR §46.111 Criteria for IRB approval of research. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

It is important that you retain this letter for your records and present upon request to necessary parties.

- This approval is valid for one year. **IRB Form 4: Application to Continue (Renew) a Previously Approved Project** will be required prior to the expiration date if this project will continue beyond one year.
- Please note that any revision to previously approved materials or procedures must be approved by the IRB before it is initiated. Please submit **IRB Form 5 Application for Procedural Revisions of or Changes in Research Protocol and/or Informed Consent Form 1 of a Previously Approved Project** for this procedure.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events must be reported to the IRB. Please use **IRB Form 6 Report of Unexpected Adverse Event, Serious Injury or Death** for this procedure.
- At the completion of your data collection, please submit **IRB Form 8 IRB Report of Termination of Project.**

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact the chair of the Lynn University IRB, Robert Reich (rreich@lynn.edu)

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APPENDIX C

Letter to Respondents to the Flyer

Dear Principal-School Leader:

Thanks for agreeing to participate in the qualitative case study *Examination of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Antibias-Antiracist Curriculum in a Montessori Setting.* We are excited at the prospect of visiting your school and learning more about the CRP and ABAR work you are doing.

The study requires that both researchers visit your school for at least 5 days. There may be 2 additional days required if a malfunction of some sort occurs, or an act of God, such as inclement weather or illness of participants or researchers. The researchers would like to spend approximately 2 days observing classrooms, the school campus and evening, parent activities. We would like to interview three focus groups of parents, teachers, and administrators. The researchers request the school leader randomly select 12 parents of different racial backgrounds to represent the school, preferably, an equal number or Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites-Asians. We would also request you identify eight teachers for the instructional support group and at least two or three administrators or school leaders. The researchers would also like to gather any data that may be relevant to the study, such as, student attendance, disciplinary infractions, suspensions, and high stakes testing results for students for the past 3 years.

Please provide some dates in mid to late August that will be amenable to your busy schedule for us to visit your school. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. Finally, we appreciate your valuable time and participation in this study and hope we can provide some meaningful insight to the Montessori community at large.

With gratitude,

Lucy Canzoneri-Golden,
Cofounder-Codirector

Juliet King,
Cofounder-Codirector

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

Purpose of the Research

The purpose to this research to examine the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators on the connection between Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Antibias-Antiracist curriculum and outcomes for student of color.

Specific Procedures

Three days will be spent conducting interviews with three focus groups of randomly selected parents, teachers, and administrators/school leaders. The focus groups will consist of approximately twelve parents, eight teachers and three to four administrators/school leaders at each site. A digital voice recorder attached to a computer will be used that also provides a vocal recording and a scripted recording of the interviews.

Duration of Participation and Compensation

The interviews should last no longer than 30 to 45 minutes each and the classroom observations will be conducted over a 3- to 5-day period. There will be no compensation for participation.

Risks

Risks are minimal, however if a participant feels uncomfortable or stressed the researchers will stop the audiotape interview and immediately destroy the tape.

Benefits

There are no benefits to participating in the focus groups other than participants having the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts in a confidential setting.

Confidentiality

The researchers will follow the protocols as outlined in the web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants" by the National Institutes of Health Office of Extra Mural Research. The focus groups are strictly voluntary and no penalty will be imposed on nonparticipation. The confidentiality will be closely guarded. Confidentiality will be established by using pseudonyms for participants' names and letter names A, B, C will be used to protect the identity of the schools.

Contact Information

If you have any question about the research project you may contact Lucy Canzoneri-Golden (Phone: [redacted]; email: [redacted]) or Juliet King (Phone: [redacted]; email: [redacted]). For any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Robert Reich, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects at [redacted] or [redacted].

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and have the research study explained. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

By signing I am consenting to participate in the study.

APPENDIX E

Audio-Taped Semistructured Questions

Questions for Parents

1) Why did you choose to send your children to this school?
   - How did you find out about the school?
   - How important is Montessori?
   - How important is CRP-ABAR?
   - How important is student population?
   - How important is parent population?
2) Tell me about this schools' focus on CRP and Antibias and Antiracist curriculum.
   - What does this idea mean to you?
   - Tell me a story about how you have observed it in your child's classroom.
   - Tell me how you've observed it in school wide events?
   - How does it connect or not connect to Montessori?
3) How do you see CRP-ABAR having an impact on your child's learning?
   - Impact on how you feel about the school?
   - Impact on relationship with teachers-staff?
   - Impact on relationship with other parents?
   - Any other positives and negatives?
4) Other questions you wish I had asked
5) How do you identify?
   - What is you ethnic-racial background?

Questions for Teachers

1) Tell me about this schools' focus on CRP and Antibias and Antiracist curriculum.
   - What does this idea mean to you?
   - Tell me a story about how you have observed it in your classroom.
   - Tell me how you've observed it in school wide events?
   - How does it connect or not connect to Montessori?
2) How do you approach teaching CRP-ABAR in your classroom?
   - What adjustments, if any, you have had to make within the Montessori curriculum to support CRP-ABAR?
3) How do you see CRP-ABAR impacting your students?
   - How does it impact your students of color, behavior?
   - Attendance?
   - Academic outcomes?

4) In what ways has the school supported you in CRP-ABAR
   - Ample planning?

- Grade group collaboration?
- Administrative leadership?
- Professional development?
- Classroom materials?

5) What are some of the challenges for implementing CRP-ABAR within your Montessori classroom?
6) What are some of the benefits for implementing CRP-ABAR within you Montessori classroom?
7) Other questions you wish I had asked
8) How do you identify?
    - What is your ethnic-racial background?

Questions for Administrators-School Leaders

1) How did you and your school get involved in CRP-ABAR?
    - What are the reasons it became a school wide focus?
    - What roles did the teachers play in CRP-ABAR curriculum development?
    - What roles did the parents play in the implementation of CRP-ABAR at the school?
2) How do you see CRP-ABAR impacting your students?
    - How does it impact your students of color, behavior?
    - Attendance?
    - Academic outcomes?
3) In what ways has the school administration supported the implementation of CRP-ABAR?
    - Teachers?
    - Students?
    - Parents?

4) What are some of the challenges for implementing CRP-ABAR within your Montessori classroom?
5) What are some of the benefits for implementing CRP-ABAR within you Montessori classroom?
6) What do you think you can do as an administrator to move your school to the next level?
7) Other questions you wish I had asked
8) How do you identify?
    - What is your ethnic-racial background?

APPENDIX F

Culturally Responsive Rubric

Rubric for Culturally Responsive Lessons/Assignments

(Developed by J. Aguilar-Valdez, 2015)

Criteria	Minimal	Emerging	Effective	Highly Effective
VOICE Lesson/Assignment allows places for students to work together cooperatively or share their learning experiences, strengths, backgrounds, interests, and needs with the instructor and each other	No intentionally designed places for students to work together, learn cooperatively, or share these things – it is all teacher@centered.	One brief place for working together or sharing, not directly integrated with the topic of the lesson(s), otherwise teacher@centered.	Several places for working together cooperatively or sharing, somewhat connected to the topic of the lessons – mostly student@ centered.	Students work together cooperatively or share throughout, in ways deeply interwoven with the topic of the lesson(s) – fully student@centered.
DIFFERENTIATION Lesson/Assignment provides opportunities for individual learners to express their learning in various ways, accounting for multiple learning styles.	Only one way for all students to express their learning	Students may interact with material in more than one way, but final product(s) have only one way to be considered acceptable.	Several ways for students to express their learning.	Several ways for students to express their learning, which have been informed by student input and instructor knowledge of individual students' strengths and needs.

ACCESS Lesson/Activity communicates ideas in several different ways	Ideas communicated in only one way.	Ideas communicated in two similar ways.	Ideas communicated in three or more different ways	Ideas communicated in three of more different ways that are informed by student input and instructor knowledge of students' differing learning styles.
CONNECTION Lesson/Activity incorporates real@life **connections** and representations from various cultures and life experiences.	No or minimal real@life connections made or representations given	One real@life connection made or represented from the experiences of the dominant culture	More than one real@ life connection made or represented but mostly from the experiences of the dominant culture	More than one real@life connection made or represented from a variety of cultures and life experiences.
HIGHER ORDER THINKING Lesson/Assignment provides avenues for students to engage in higher cognitive processing, applying learning to bigIpicture analysis and creative applications for learning	Rudimentary level recall and understanding is all that is asked for or expected	Mostly recall and basic understanding, with only one or two opportunities for higher order applications and creative thinking.	Some higher order applications and creative thinking included, but only in one predetermined way.	Many opportunities for higher order applications and creative thinking, in several ways as originated from the students.

SOCIAL JUSTICE Lesson/Assignment provides avenues for students to connect learning to social, political, or environmental concerns that affect them and their lives and enact change.	No or minimal avenues for connecting learning to social concerns that are relevant to the students.	One predetermined avenue to connect learning to social concerns relevant to the students and enact change.	Several predetermined avenues to connect learning to social concerns relevant to the students and enact change.	Students given opportunity to explore many avenues of their choosing that connect learning to social concerns that are relevant to them and enact change meaningful to them.
EQUITY/ DECOLONIZATION Attention paid to minimizing dominant discourses, deficit perspectives, and possible biases/micro@aggressions in instruction/language/ expectations so students from non@dominant backgrounds (e.g. English language learners, students from poverty, students with special needs, students of various genders/sexual orientations) have access and can participate as readily as those from dominant backgrounds.	The dominant discourse and perspective is the only one presented, and students who cannot access it will fail.	Some attention paid to making the discourse inclusive, but students are still expected to sink or swim.	Discourse and perspectives are presented in a variety of ways that are inclusive of non@ dominant backgrounds, students given some multiple points of access.	Discourse and perspectives are presented in a variety of inclusive ways that honor students of non@ dominant backgrounds, and all students of non@ dominant backgrounds can access and feel included in the material

APPENDIX G

Cedar Hill Suspension Rates 2015 to 2018

Cedar Hill Suspension Rates 2017-2018

Cedar Hill
Suspension Rates 2015 – 2016

Ethnicity	Cumulative Enrollment	Total Suspensions	Unduplicated Count of Students Suspended	Suspension Rate	Percent of Students Suspended Once	Percent of Students Suspended Multiples
African American	72	1	1	1.4%	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	27	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	85	1	1	1.2%	100.0%	0.0%
White	106	3	1	0.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Two or More Races	23	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not Reported						
All	313	5	3	0.9%	66.7%	33.3%

Cedar Hill Suspension Rates 2017-2018

Cedar Hill

Suspension Rates 2016 – 2017

Ethnicity	Cumulative Enrollment	Total Suspensions	Unduplicated Count of Students Suspended	Suspension Rate	Percent of Students Suspended Once	Percent of Students Suspended Multiples
African American	80	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	23	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	100	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	116	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More Races	55	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not Reported	*	*	*	*	*	*
All	382	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Cedar Hill Suspension Rates 2017-2018

Cedar Hill

Suspension Rates 2017 – 2018

Ethnicity	Cumulative Enrollment	Total Suspensions	Unduplicated Count of Students Suspended	Suspension Rate	Percent of Students Suspended Once	Percent of Students Suspended Multiples
African American	89	1	1	1.1%	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	26	1	1	3.8%	100.0%	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	121	2	2	1.7%	100.0%	0.0%
White	138	1	1	0.7%	100.0%	0.0%
Two or More Races	73	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not Reported	*	*	*	*	*	*
All	456	5	5	1.1%	100.0%	0.0%

APPENDIX H

New Heights Referral Rates 2015 to 2019

New Heights Behavioral Referrals 2015-2016

New Heights
Behavioral Referrals 2015–2016

Infraction	Number of Incidents	Blacks	Latinx	Whites
Disruptive Behavior	8	3	2	3
Confrontation with another student	4	1	1	2
Failure to comply with classroom school rules	2	1	1	
Total	14	5	4	5

New Heights Referrals 2016-2017

New Heights
Referrals 2016-2017

Infraction	Number of Incidents	Black	Hispanics	Whites	Other
Disruptive behavior	11	5	5	0	1
Confrontation with another student	2		2	0	0
Failure to Comply with classroom school rules	7	3	4	0	0
Confrontation with staff member	1		1	0	0
Defiance of school personnel	3	2	1	0	0
Total	24	10	13	0	1
Percentage of infractions	100	42	54	0	4
Percentage of student population	0	17	59	20	3
Number of students	0	74	255	87	13

New Heights Referrals 2017-2018

New Heights
Referrals 2017-2018

Infraction	No. of Incidents	Blacks	Hispanics	Whites	Other
Inappropriate item or materials	1	0	0	1	0
Repeat profane-crude language	1	1	0	0	0
Disruptive behavior	24	12	10	2	0
Confrontation with another student	11	6	5	0	0
Failure to comply with classroom school rules	9	5	4	0	0
Confrontation with staff member	3	2	1	0	0
Failure to comply with previous corrective strategies	0	2	0	0	0
Fighting (minor)	0	0	1	1	0
Provocative language directed at someone	1	1	0	0	0
Vandalism (minor)	1	1	0	0	0
Defiance of school personnel	9	4	0	5	0
Excessive absences	2	0	2	0	0
Total	66	34	23	9	0
Percentage of infractions	100	52	35	14	0
Percentage of student population		19	59	18	
Number of students	3	93	289	82	

New Heights Referrals 2018-2019

New Heights
Referrals 2018-2019

Infraction	Number of Incidents	Black	Hispanics	Whites	Other
Inappropriate item or materials	5	0	2	3	0
Disruptive behavior	23	12	9	2	0
Disruptive behavior school bus/bus stop	1	0	1	0	0
Cutting class	1	1	0	0	0
Failure to comply with classroom school rules	5	2	0	3	0
Confrontation with another student	6	5	0	1	0
Failure to comply with previous corrective strategies	6	1	5	0	0
Petty theft	1	0	1	0	0
Provocative language directed at someone	1	0	0	1	0
Defiance of school personnel	3	3	0	0	0
Total	52	24	18	0	0
Percentage of infractions		46	35	19	0
Percentage of student population	100	20	59	15	
Number of students	511	102	301	77	

APPENDIX I

Rapid River Referral Rates 2015 to 2019

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Individuals 2016-2017

Rapid River
Discipline Referrals by Individuals 2016-2017

Level/Race	Blacks	Whites	Latinx	Other	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	1	2
Lower elementary	9	2	0	1	12
Upper elementary	1	2	0	0	3
Junior high	4	3	0	0	7
Total	15	7	0	2	24
Percentage of student population	42	49	5	4	100
Percentage of discipline	63	29			

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Offences 2016-2017

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Offences 2016 – 2017		
Offence	Total	Reports
Disrespect	44%	14
Disruptive Behavior	19%	6
Defacing Property	3%	1
Inappropriate Language/ Behavior	6%	2
Verbal Abuse	6%	2
Phys. Agg/ Fighting	13%	4
Failure to Follow Instructions	3%	1
Theft	6%	2
Total	100%	32
There were thirty-two behavioral referral reports in 2016-2017. 63%of the offences were attributed to black students.		

Rapid River Behavioral Referrals by Individuals 2017-2018

Rapid River Behavioral Referrals by Individuals 2017 – 2018					
Level/Race	Blacks	Whites	Latinx	Other	Total
Kindergarten	1	0	0	0	1
Lower Elementary	2	1	0	0	3
Upper Elementary	3	1	0	1	5
Junior High	3	1	0		4
Total	9	3	0	1	13
Percentage of Referrals	69%	23%		8%	100%

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Offences 2017-2018

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Offences 2017 – 2018		
Offence	Total Percentage	Reports
Disrespect	35%	7
Disruptive Behavior	15%	3
Inappropriate Language/Behavior	10%	2
Verbal Abuse	5%	1
Phys. Agg/ Fighting	10%	2
Assault	5%	1
Threat	5%	1
Insubordination	15%	3
Total	100%	20

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Individuals 2018-2019

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Individuals 2018 – 2019					
Level/Race	Blacks	Whites	Latinx	Other	Total
Kindergarten	0	0	0	0	0
Lower Elementary	6	0	1	0	7
Upper Elementary	1	0	0	0	1
Junior High	2	0	0	0	2
Total	9	0	1	0	10
Percentage of Incidents	90%	0%	10%	0%	100%

Rapid River Discipline Referrals by Offences 2018-2019

Rapid River

Discipline Referrals by Offences 2018 – 2019

Offence	Total Percentage	Reports
Disrespect	43%	10
Disruptive Behavior	35%	8
Theft	4%	1
Verbal Abuse	4%	1
Assault	4%	1
Insubordination	9%	2
Total	100%	23

APPENDIX J

Questionnaire E-Mailed to Administrator

1. What kinds of lesson plans or record keeping do the teachers use at your school? Is this done on a daily, or weekly basis? Who checks this? Please add any additional information pertinent to understanding this mechanism.
2. Are the teachers required to align with state standards or Common Core?
3. Do the teachers plan with Montessori Scope and Sequence and then align with the state or do they do the reverse, plan from the state standards, and then align the Montessori lessons? Any additional challenges or insights you can share?
4. How are students with special needs and English language learner reflected in those lesson plans?
5. How often are students tested and are the tests Norm referenced or Criteria Based? Any additional comments pertaining to testing?
6. How is the data used from high-stakes testing and other assessments to drive instruction? To analyze performance gaps? Data chats and if so, how often and with who?
7. Are teachers required to share data with parents and administrators and how often?
8. Are CRP-ABAR lessons decided by an administrator, the teachers or with in grade group divisions? How is it monitored through an integration of the Montessori sequence or as a separate entity?

CRP-ABAR Rubric for Montessori Teachers

(By Lucy Canzoneri-Golden and Juliet King 2020)

Criteria: Teacher

Teacher displays basic Montessori principles and is knowledgeable and respectful of other cultures. She has a reverence for all children. She has effective classroom management techniques and provides differential instruction and emotional support according to the needs of the child.

Fundamentals	Emerging CRP-ABAR Teacher	Effective CRP-ABAR Teacher	Highly Effective CRP-ABAR Teacher
1. I am MACTE Certified or in the process of becoming certified. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 2. I act more as a guide and not as the center of the classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 3. I am always prepared with lesson plans, teaching materials and follow up activities. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 4. I do not over correct students. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 5. I allow students to make work choices. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 6. I use observations to determine the needs of my students. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 7. I display an open and approachable demeanor with others. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient	8. I use my power to nurture and protect students, not to dominate them. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 9. I am becoming aware of the differences in my classroom (culturally, learning styles, identities, etc.). --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 10. I build trust through community meetings that allow for all students to participate in the establishment of guidelines for the classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 11. I am beginning to build cross-cultural relationships with parents, free of judgment. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient	12. I am culturally competent and do not favor one culture over another. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 13. I am able to self-reflect and recognize any instances of bias and or micro aggressions. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 14. I do not let Eurocentric Montessori philosophy become a barrier to how I interact with marginalized students. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 15. I am non judgmental in tone and communication, including facial expressions and body language. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 16. I am aware of my deficit thinking when challenges arise with students. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 17. I bring a critical analysis of ABAR to all areas of the curriculum in lessons presented. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient	18. I engage in daily self-reflection resulting in critical consciousness of bias practices that need to be deconstructed. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 19. I observe students applying analytical skills and ABAR vocabulary when participating in classroom discussions. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 20. I observe students applying critical thinking skills in ABAR to resolve conflicts in the classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 21. I observe no evidence of power dynamics in the classroom for, example social hierarchies. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 22. I deliver CRP-ABAR instruction through both a curriculum-oriented approach and a systemic oriented approach. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 23. I have eliminated bias, micro aggressions and deficit thinking from my teaching practices. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 24. CRP practices are becoming fluid in my classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 25. Students are succeeding and there are no academic and behavioral disparities based on race observed in my classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient

Criteria: Physical Environment			
The physical environment is conducive to a Montessori education that encourages inclusiveness, equity and supports Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Anti-bias/ Anti-racist practices.			
Fundamentals	**Emerging**	**Effective**	**Highly Effective**
1. All areas of the Montessori Curriculum are set up in a logical sequential order within the classroom and easily accessible to the children. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 2. There is evidence of a safe space for children to retreat, discuss conflicts and reflect. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 3. There is an area in the room where children can go when they want a snack. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 4. Community meetings are a part of the daily culture of the classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 5. The furniture is child appropriate --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 6. The teacher's space is unobtrusive; there is no teacher desk. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 7. There is a classroom library. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 8. Parents are volunteering in and out of the classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient	9. A full set of Montessori materials in all areas of the curriculum with some follow-up commercial and teacher made lessons. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 10. Lessons on the shelves are beginning to include a non-European narrative. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 11. Lessons, that include pictures and artifacts are beginning to reflect people from the global majority. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 12. The safe space has symbols of peace and social justice. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 13. The classroom library reflects a variety of cultures, authors, genders, abilities, religions, family makeups and races, etc. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 14. Children are actively and independently taking care of the environment. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 15. Diverse parents are volunteering in and out of the classroom. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient	16. Key components, such as the Great Lessons and Montessori timelines include perspectives from the global majority. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 17. Language, whenever possible, is presented in gender-neutral manner. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 18. The classroom library reflects a variety of cultures, authors, genders, abilities, religions, family makeups and races, etc. that goes beyond biographies associated with Black History and Hispanic Heritage months. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 19. The environment reflects the cultures of all children in the classroom, regardless of ability, race, gender, origin, orientation, etc. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 20. A diverse group of parents participate in special classroom and school wide events. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient	21. Students are applying ABAR principles in their classrooms, the school and in their communities, making signs, signing petitions, participating in and leading protests. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 22. Students are reevaluating and questioning school policies to align with ABAR principles. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 23. Students are researching and presenting on social justice issues. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient 24. Parents of different races and ethnicities, especially from the global majority, are active contributors to the classroom, bringing their knowledge, skills and expertise. --- Emerging __ Progressing __ Proficient

Note. **CRP** = Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, **ABAR** = Anti-Bias Anti-Racist.